



# Interagency, network and co-governance in the child care sector

**Guy Bellemare, Marcos Barros and Louise Briand**

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## PRÉSENTATION DU CRISES

Notre Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales (CRISES) est une organisation interuniversitaire qui étudie et analyse principalement « **les innovations et les transformations sociales** ».

Une innovation sociale (IS) est une intervention initiée par des acteurs sociaux pour répondre à une aspiration, subvenir à un besoin, apporter une solution ou profiter d'une opportunité d'action afin de modifier des relations sociales, de transformer un cadre d'action ou de proposer de nouvelles orientations culturelles.

En se combinant, les innovations peuvent avoir à long terme une efficacité sociale qui dépasse le cadre du projet initial (entreprises, associations, etc.) et représenter un enjeu qui questionne les grands équilibres sociétaux. Elles deviennent alors une source de transformations sociales et peuvent contribuer à l'émergence de nouveaux modèles de développement.

Les chercheurs du CRISES étudient les innovations sociales à partir de quatre axes complémentaires voués à l'analyse d'autant de dimensions de l'innovation sociale et de son inscription dans des processus de transformation sociale :

### Axe 1 : Innovations sociales et transformations dans les politiques et les pratiques sociales

Cet axe regroupe des projets qui se structurent autour de **la construction et l'application des politiques publiques et du rôle qu'y jouent les demandes sociales**. Les travaux des membres de cet axe se déclinent en 5 thèmes :

- L'IS à travers l'évolution historique des régulations sociales
- Les nouvelles pratiques démocratiques et sociales
- Le transfert des pratiques sociales et construction des politiques publiques
- Les IS et la transformation sociale dans la santé et la communauté
- L'IS dans le logement social.

### Axe 2 : Innovations sociales et transformations dans le territoire et les collectivités locales

Les projets qui se regroupent dans cet axe analysent les **innovations sociales dans la perspective du rapport des collectivités au territoire**, ce qui les amène à privilégier l'intersectorialité et à examiner l'effet des diverses formes de proximité (physique et relationnelle) sur la structuration et les nouvelles dynamiques des collectivités territoriales. Les travaux des membres de cet axe se déclinent en 5 thèmes :

- Les actions innovatrices de revitalisation des communautés
- L'IS en milieux ruraux et forestier

- L'action communautaire contre la pauvreté et l'exclusion
- Les modalités innovatrices de gouvernance territoriale
- Les nouvelles aspirations et la mouvance identitaire.

### Axe 3 : Innovations sociales et transformations dans les entreprises collectives

Regroupés autour de l'objet de **l'entreprise collective et de ses relations avec la sphère de l'économie dominante**, cet axe regroupe des projets qui analysent des innovations sociales qui se déploient autour des entreprises d'économie sociale, des sociétés d'État et des nouvelles formes hybrides d'entreprises. Les travaux de cet axe se déclinent en 5 thèmes :

- Les modèles de gouvernance et de gestion des entreprises sociales et collectives
- Le financement solidaire et l'accompagnement de l'entrepreneuriat collectif
- L'évaluation de l'économie sociale
- L'économie sociale et la transformation sociale
- Les modèles hybrides : partenariats publics-privés-économie sociale.

### Axe 4 : Innovations sociales et transformations dans le travail et l'emploi

Les membres de cet axe abordent **l'IS en lien avec l'évolution des politiques d'emploi et les conditions de réalisation du travail**. Ils analysent la qualité de l'emploi et du travail dans une perspective sociétale d'intégration socioprofessionnelle. Six thèmes de recherche seront privilégiés :

- L'IS dans les relations industrielles et la gestion des ressources humaines
- Les stratégies émergentes dans l'action syndicale
- Les nouveaux statuts d'emploi et le précaire
- Les problèmes et aspirations en matière de protections sociales
- Les nouvelles stratégies d'insertion en emploi
- La gestion des âges et des temps sociaux et la conciliation travail-famille.

**Retrouvez le descriptif complet des axes de recherche du CRISES sur :**

<http://crises.uqam.ca/recherche/axes-de-recherche.html>

## LES ACTIVITÉS DU CRISES

En plus de la conduite de nombreux projets de recherche, l'accueil de stagiaires postdoctoraux et la formation des étudiants, le [CRISES](#) organise toute une série de séminaires et de colloques qui permettent le partage et la diffusion de connaissances nouvelles. Le Centre dirige également plusieurs collections de Cahiers de recherche qui permettent de rendre compte des plus [récents travaux des membres](#).

**Juan-Luis Klein**  
Directeur

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AECEO.....	Association of Early Childhood Educators
CCCF .....	Canadian Child Care Federation
CCHRSC .....	Child Care Human Resources Sector Council
CECE .....	College of Early Childhood Educators
CUPE.....	Canadian Union of Public Employees
FDK .....	Full Day Kindergarten
OCBCC.....	Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
TCBCC .....	Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care
TCFN.....	Toronto Child and Family Network



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the role they play in social reproduction, child care services are an important element in the transformation of welfare states in post-industrial societies. Affordable and quality child care services greatly contribute to women's access to the labour market. Child care services also form an important employment sector in which women's labour is dominant. Non-profit child care enterprises are currently in the midst of defining their relation to the State and municipalities in Ontario.

The originality of our research stems from our interest in both the constraints and the opportunities created by the growing involvement of provincial authorities, as well as from our interest in the role played by child care intermediary organizations (groupings and coalitions). Our report provides a current portrait of the child care intermediary organizations in Ontario and an analysis of its governmental relations through the concepts of co-construction and co-production of public policies in Ontario.

Our research methodology included the consultation of public archives and documents that could help us form a better picture of the child care network in Ontario as well as understand its history in the past decades. With the help of this historical and structural data, we were able to approach the network actors and interview them to uncover subtleties of the cooperation between intermediary organizations and their interaction with the government.

The analysis of our data unveiled the following contributions to the understanding of the dynamic of Ontario's child care network. First, we showed the importance of the intermediary organizations in the co-construction process in terms of the enactment of laws, the specification of programs guidelines, the establishment of budgets, and the creation of general policies. However, we found some elements which nuance this influence. In general, the division between intermediary organizations in terms of purpose and intended model for the child care system creates a weakened movement. This aspect is reinforced by the choice made by some actors to reinforce the professional path in child care which has not received unanimous approval as illustrated by the creation of the College of Early Childhood Educators which was received with some criticisms by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and CUPE.

Our other contribution was in the analysis of co-production. Here, we found that the development of the child care system, while officially following a public and non-profit option desired by both provincial and municipal governments, is filled with political obstacles and financial problems which have crippled the not-for-profit operators left space for the expansion of the market alternative. We have observed, however, that intermediary organizations have been important in promoting and maintaining, through public awareness and political pressure, the public-funded choice despite these difficulties.

The impact of these intermediary organizations on human resources policies is highly varied. Municipally-operated child care centers benefit from policies established by municipalities that offer training, control work conditions, and provide public pension plans. Other licensed operators (community-based and private) are also supposed to follow these work standards to guarantee their continuity in the system. Unions have an important impact on human resources policies in community-based centers where there are negotiated training, work conditions, and pension plans. In our research, however, participants considered that most non-unionized small (community-based or private) child care operators don't necessarily have any human resources policies.

This analysis of the divided network of intermediary organizations indicates the practical implications of our study. With the clear identification of each organization's mission, and the history that justifies and legitimates it, child care groups could be able to establish a better dialogue between themselves which can, at the same time, respect each other's idiosyncratic perspectives and forge a better common purpose while pursuing their collective objectives. Also, with our study, child care operators should be able to understand their intermediary organizations and to develop a better partnership with them by benefiting of their expertise and services (and be aware of their limitations)

*Key words: Child Care, intermediary organizations, network, labor relations, human resource management, public policy, Ontario*

# INTRODUCTION

Through the role they play in social reproduction, child care services are an important element in the transformation of welfare states in post-industrial societies. Affordable and quality child care services greatly contribute to women's access to the labour market. Child care services also form an important employment sector in which women's labour is dominant. Non-profit child care enterprises are currently in the midst of defining their relation to the State and municipalities in Ontario.

The transformation of these social relationships occurs differently from one province to the other. Child care is central to dynamics of governmental relations and to relations between different interest groups; it is also involved in the transformation of the frontiers of the private and political spheres, as well as the limits of work and 'non-work'. Its development is characterized by complex relationships of co-design, bargaining, making demands or opposition between civil society and the State (Vaillancourt, 2009; Phillips, 2006; Bellemare, 2000).

So far, researchers have focused on the influence of the State on community organizations, rather than vice versa (Proulx et al., 2007; White, 2001; Evers & Laville, 2004). The role played by networks of actors has to be taken into account in such an analysis (Briand, Bellemare, & Gravel, 2006; Castells, 1998; Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Elson & Rogers, 2010). It may actually be the case that networks, rather than organizations, influence the relationship to the State (Langlais, 2008; Pleyers, 2005).

We believe that the study of intermediary associations may reveal largely unknown sources of social innovation and development. Indeed, the more co-operative than competitive nature of social economy enterprises may make it possible to create public goods (training, insurance, sharing of experiences and practices and management tools, etc.), which may explain why social economy enterprises and co-ops do better than private companies and why they are also better managed (Bellemare et al., 2011; Malenfant et al., 2011; MDEIE, 2008). These findings may help change the way social economy enterprise managers look at their enterprises (they really don't consider themselves "good" managers) and the role and support that public policy could give them. We also think that intermediary organizations could play a larger role in supporting the initiatives of their member associations, especially in spotting and disseminating social innovations.

Groupings and coalitions, considered as non-profit organizations, were analyzed as major actors in the transformation of social relationships. The originality of our research stems from our interest in both the constraints and the opportunities created by the growing involvement of provincial authorities, as well as from our interest in the role that groupings and coalitions of child care services can play in the co-construction and co-production of policies and accountability requirements in Ontario.

To this end, the research focused in (1) identifying the main actors situated at different levels of government (provincial, Toronto region) and in coalitions (Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, etc.), (2) considering the role of the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario and (3) analyzing their actions as they relate to their demands and to the organization of the sector.

Our research methodology included the consultation of public archives and documents that could help us form a better picture of the child care network in Ontario as well as understand its history in the past decades. With the help of this historical and structural data, we were able to approach the network actors and interview them to uncover subtleties of the cooperation between intermediary organizations and their interaction with the government.

The analysis of our data unveiled the following contributions to the understanding of the dynamic of Ontario's child care network. First, we showed the importance of the intermediary organizations in the co-construction process in terms of the enactment of laws, the specification of programs guidelines, the establishment of budgets, and the creation of general policies. However, we found some elements which nuance this influence. In general, the division between intermediary organizations in terms of purpose and intended model for the child care system creates a weakened movement. This aspect is reinforced by the choice made by some actors to reinforce the professional path in child care which has not received unanimous approval.

Our other contribution was in the analysis of co-production. Here, we found that the development of the child care system, while officially following a public and non-profit option desired by both provincial and municipal governments, is filled with political obstacles and financial problems which have crippled the not-for-profit operators left space for the expansion of the market alternative. We have observed, however, that intermediary organizations have been important in promoting and maintaining, through public awareness and political pressure, the public-funded choice despite these difficulties.

This text will be structured in ten different sections. After this introduction, we will explain the theoretical framework that sustained our data analysis, particularly the concepts of co-construction and co-production of public policies, and the methodology used in our research. Next, we will give a brief history of child care in Ontario followed by a portrait of the current state of affairs in that area. The central piece of the text will explore the actors in the Ontario network, their history, structure, actions and their relation to other intermediary organizations and the government at the local and provincial level. In the following two sections, we will then concentrate in the co-production and co-construction efforts led or influenced by Ontario's child care intermediary organizations as revealed in our investigation. We will end our presentation with the discussion of our findings and final comments.



## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our theoretical framework is built around the literature on governance and its effect on the relationship between government and third sector organizations. Since the rise of the neoliberal state in the eighties, former welfare states have opened their doors to the participation of many actors from the market and the civil society in what is now commonly called the “welfare mix” (Evers & Laville, 2004). More specifically, social economy organizations have been especially important in providing services that the State would not or could not offer its citizens (Pestoff et al., 2006). Moreover, these organizations have been advocating for better public support by the public sphere to many social needs and aspirations (Lévesque & Thiry, 2008).

These two movements have been recently examined by social economy theorists (Vaillancourt, 2009; 2011) in order to understand the real impact of these organizations on the creation and application of public policy. In his work, Vaillancourt (2009; 2011) proposes the analysis of two different concepts to understand this dynamic process: co-construction (institutional dimension) and co-production (organizational dimension) of public policy. According to the author:

“the difference between the two concepts is as follows: co-production refers to participation by stakeholders from civil society and the market in the implementation of public policy, while co-construction refers to participation by those very stakeholders in the design of public policy. Thus, co-construction stands upstream from the adoption of public policy, whereas co-production lies downstream, at the moment of its implementation.” (2009, p. 277)

Futhermore, Vaillancourt (2009; 2011) indicates that the notion of co-production has two components. One stems from the microsociological perspective of organizations production of services, while the second refers to the macrosociological (and political) aspect of relations between different sectors of socio-economic activity. In essence, according to the author, the difference is between:

“the co-production of services of public interest . . . activities in which users (or clients or citizens) participate in production and management on the same basis as employees . . . [and] the co-production of public policy [which] concerns the application of public policy” (Vaillancourt, 2009, p. 284–5).

In our research, we are mainly interested in this second macro level of co-production. Apart from when there is no co-production (monoproduction by public-sector organizations), co-production may involve chiefly private-sector organizations or chiefly tertiary-sector organizations, some combination of the two. Furthermore, co-construction of public policy from the outset can give rise to various different scenarios, ranging from monoproduction by the State to a neo-liberal

model in which the socioeconomic elites play a major role, or a corporatist model, or a democratic, mutual-support model anchored in a plural economic perspective (Vaillancourt, 2009, p. 289-291). We share Vaillancourt's hypothesis:

“that the democratization and enhancement of public policy requires participation by collective and individual stakeholders from the market and civil society in its creation (co-construction) and its application (co-production).” (2009, p. 278)

The study of co-production will have two main components: a description of the proportion of non-profit services relative to all private and public (municipal, school) child care services and a description of the various types of groupings and coalitions they form to provide services to their members. We will also be looking at the role played by the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario in gaining recognition for the work of early childhood educators.

We will be asking two cross-sectional questions in studying groupings and coalitions and what they do: (1) To what extent do groupings and coalitions help prepare their members for general management, bookkeeping, accountability, human resources management, etc.? How? (Setting up services, pooling skills, making group purchases of goods and services, etc.) (2) To what extent does their activity contribute to the development of a more democratic management model fostering participation of parents, staff and other collective stakeholders (Vaillancourt, 2009; Gravel et al., 2006; Bellemare et al. 2006)? As Pestoff (2006) has shown, certain conditions facilitate the democratization of management, such as sufficient public funding and appropriate regulation, which the co-construction of public policy may favour. However, other studies on Quebec day cares suggest that stable public funding diminished parent participation since it was no longer necessary for the survival of the organizations (Léger, 1984).

A study of the activities of various types of groupings and coalitions of non-profit child care services with respect to co-construction of Ontario child care policy will be based on defensive actions and activities to promote non-profit child care services. The study will look at the issues on two main levels: provincial and municipal (Toronto). We will focus on the actions of child care groupings and coalitions with respect to the government authorities concerned (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education, City of Toronto's Children's Services), but also other actors, such as the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO), College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC), Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) and Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

These actors fulfill the role of Ontario child care intermediary organizations. These groups are classically defined as non-profit organizations which stand outside the governmental sphere and through autonomous action *“represent and make the aspirations and common interests of a category of people prevail in the opinion of those who are held responsible for the public interest”*

(Dion, 1964, p.475). These organizations and their role on the Ontario and Toronto child care network will be the object of our research.

We will be studying the various types of action and demands on these various scales, both with regard to the ability to make proposals and the ability to co-construct policy with the various actors concerned. By policy, we mean laws, programs, regulations, standards, accountability requirements, etc. We will be studying the extent to which groupings and coalitions manage to develop “inclusive forms of governance in which dialogue is favoured between the elected officials and the leaders of the participatory democracy. This supposes the existence of interfaces, forums for mediation and deliberation, public spaces.” (Vaillancourt, 2009, p. 294).



## 2. METHODOLOGY

After establishing our theoretical framework, we will now specify our methodology. Our research is centered on the practices of co-construction and co-production enacted by intermediary organizations in the Ontario child care network. As such, our research strategy is based on case study of the child care organizations in Ontario. Our idea was to gather as much data from each actor to understand their place in the network and his role in the co-production and co-construction of public policy.

Within that goal, we conducted in-depth interviews with key informants in each group (see annex 1). All the participants held key position in their organizations and, as a consequence, were able to provide important insights into many aspects of their work. Our questions (see annex 2) focused on the history and structure of their associations, the relationship with the different actors in the child care network, as well as their perception of which were the major changes in the network in the last decades and their impact on child care organizations' human resources. Our interviews were around 60 minutes each, while some took almost two hours. In order to maximize resources, all interviews were held on Skype.

We interviewed two representatives from the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, two representatives of the Municipality of Toronto (on policy development, funding, accountability requirements, definition of policies and programs, etc.), as well as representatives from other intermediary organizations: Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare, College of Early Childhood Educators, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ryerson University, Campaign 2000, and child care organizations. Our goal was to have a wider and deep view of the Ontario childcare network and its actors.

Prior to conducting the interviews, we reviewed the organizations' internal literature, such as annual reports, studies, special reports and newsletters. These written documents were essential to give us a previous idea of the actors involved and nourished our interviews and subsequent analysis. All the interviews and collected documents were input into a computer system, coded and analyzed on the basis of categories adapted from Lapointe et al. (2004) and Bherer and Desaulniers (1998) and categories emerging from the case studies. The dimensions to be analysed are identification of sectorial issues with respect defining services, funding, human resources, etc., with regard to their potential for co-operation or conflict, structure for representing interests and conflicts, conditions of emergence of groupings; internal and external dynamics of the associations; achievements.

The research was initially planned to employ a partnership approach<sup>1</sup>, however, due to major time and resource constraints considering the scope of intermediary organizations involved in our research, we were not able to pursue this ideal partnership option in our study. We did nevertheless involve all participants in the construction of the final report by demand their constant feedback in each of the previous versions of this document. In that way, many of the involved actors were able to question and validate the results of our research<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>. ARUC-RQRP, Research Partnerships: The ARUC-ÉS and RQRP-ÉS Model, Montreal, 2008, [http://www.aruc-es.uqam.ca/Portals/0/docs/pdf/Research\\_Partnerships.pdf](http://www.aruc-es.uqam.ca/Portals/0/docs/pdf/Research_Partnerships.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The representative of the OCBCC was not able to give her feedback on time for the final version of this document.

### 3. ONTARIO CHILD CARE SECTOR: A BRIEF HISTORY

In Ontario, child care history began during World War II when the required presence of women in the labour force encouraged the federal and provincial government to financially support day nurseries. At that period, funded covered half of start-up and operating costs in the centres. The program however ended with the end of the war and the return of the male workers. This first and only Canadian national child care program lasted 3 years (Friendly & Prentice, 2009). Ontario public child care system however remained in municipalities like Toronto:

*“The city of Toronto, we were the first, I guess the pioneers in childcare. So in the Second World War, the city of Toronto at that time had embraced childcare and took on responsibility, for the first time, for direct delivery of a childcare agency.”*

With the increasing participation of women in the job market, the child care movement grew, child care became a public issue, and federal and provincial governments started to pay attention to demands by new child care intermediary organizations. Many, including the women’s movements, unions, non-profit organizations, and associations, demand further public funding for centers, focusing particularly on non-profit initiatives. During the seventies and the eighties, women’s movement, through the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) put child care in the spotlight as essential for women liberation.

*“Childcare advocacy was spearheaded by coalition of feminists, trade unionists, and social justice organizations such as anti-poverty groups, working alongside front-line childcare providers” (Friendly & Prentice, 2009, p.77)*

In 1987, the elected Ontario Liberal government promised new resources to expand non-profit child care. It proclaimed a new *“comprehensive policy that recognizes child care as a basic public service, not a welfare service”*. Despite the limited policy changes, the provincial government announced a project which included non-profit child care in all new schools and introduced new resources in the shape of direct operating grants which contributed to improve early childhood educators (henceforth ECEs) salaries.

In the following years, Bob Rae’s New Democratic Party (NDP) government in Ontario, while failing to deliver the promised publicly funded non-profit child care system, was instrumental in augmenting the resources for non-profit child care by a wage enhancement grant for staff. He also largely favored the non-profit option having created a “conversion program” to transform for-profit child care centres to non-profit. Finally, in 1992, a first attempt on creating a kindergarten service was made with the Early Years Project. However, in 1995, with the arrival of Mike Harris’ conservative government, most child care reforms and ongoing projects were

cancelled or abandoned. As a consequence, funding to child care centres and the network in general was severely cut. A member of OCBCC explains this process:

*“Many of our organizations have over the past decade been defunded; our fund has been taken away, even our coalition. For example, before Mike Harris, our coalition routinely received 30 to 50 thousand dollars from the provincial government which will be a portion of our revenue but what they’ll fund us to do is capacity building in the sector because it is so fragmented and we are a trusted voice. When Mike Harris came along that money ended.”*

The biggest change implemented by the conservative government was the “system realignment” of the child care service between the provincial sphere and the municipalities. Henceforth, 47 delegated delivery agents in geographic areas in the province were established to plan, cost share and manage childcare programs. While, in general, this policy meant downloading to them the administration and the system management for childcare which would be partially funded by the province, it would also imply many changes in roles and responsibility. According to a document published by the province, before the changes, “municipal involvement in child care was discretionary, and was limited to the management of fee subsidies” (Ontario, 1999, p.420), afterwards they gave the full responsibility of planning, managing and administering childcare services to the municipalities.

At the national level, through the early 2000s, consecutive Liberal Prime Ministers started to make child care a priority with the idea of a national child care program. They promised to create a universal child care system through the Foundations program which would provide \$1 billion in resources to support provincial and territorial programs. However, in 2005, with the arrival of Prime Minister Harper, the conservative government cancelled all bilateral agreements with provinces and replaced it with the Universal Child Care Benefit which, according to federal government officials, would offer parents more choice when it came to deciding on the type of care their children needed. These federal transfers’ cuts of 1 billion dollars were not compensated by the Ontario provincial government and since then, many municipalities contemplated reductions in subsidized spaces and other service cuts.

At the provincial level, the new Liberal government elected in 2003, resumed the commitment to education, starting with an emphasis on kindergarten (called the “Best Start” program). After its re-election, the provincial government appointed Dr. Charles Pascal, from the Atkinson Centre at the University of Toronto, as its Early Learning Advisor imbued in the task of formulating the new full-day early learning program. Dr. Pascal’s report, published in 2009 (Pascal, 2009), recommended child care and kindergarten for four- and five years-old children as part of the public school system, as well as a municipal service delivery of care for children aged zero to three. The report also suggested that the Ministry of Education took responsibility for these programs at the provincial level. The first phase of the kindergarten program began in 2010 scheduled to open in nearly 600 schools in September. In September 2012, 1,700 elementary



schools were already offering the full day learning for about 120,000 four and five years old students and around 41,000 ECEs entered the new system<sup>34</sup>. According to the original governmental plan, the program should be fully implemented by September 2014.

In Ontario, most child care services are non-profit and public which governments up until 1998 have mostly benefited through policies and budget allocations. Afterwards private child care organizations have continuously increased their participation and in 2008 they occupied almost quarter of the market. Since 2004, the City of Toronto, by approving the recommendations from Councillor Olivia Chow (NDP) and Councillor Janet Davis (former president of the OCBCC) on the City Council, adopted a policy of encouraging the growth of non-profit child care organizations and restricting the expansion of for-profit facilities<sup>5</sup>. Also within that goal, throughout the province, Ontario fee subsidies and wage grants is paid directly to child care organizations, and some of the municipalities prohibit public funding of for-profit services.

In general there is a feeling that much has been done, however the Ontario child care system is still fragile enough to sway according to the provincial political climate and power shifts. According to an Ontario network member:

*“Childcare has changed since thirty years, but the funding hasn’t kept up. It was never enough to begin with and certainly hasn’t kept up with the changes that we’ve seen in society. So, unfortunately, if our mandate is universal, affordable childcare, that would be a forever project. But childcare in Ontario has really moved. I imagine this is true in many provinces. From literally an organisation founded by parents in a church basement with little or no standards to a very highly regulated profession staffed by professional early childhood educators. And so there have been a lot of changes along the way. There’s always a need for advocacy. And considering a lot of funding for childcare, even today, comes through the federal government, a little bit the provincial government, there’ll always be a need for childcare centers to be advocating for what’s best for families. But there’s no doubt that we still have a huge job in front of us. We’ve seen some really big steps forward but we’ve also seen some huge steps backwards. And that usually comes with people getting elected, who either support childcare or don’t support childcare.”*

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<sup>3</sup> Source: AECEO.

<sup>4</sup> These ECEs were transferred from child care centers to the new full-day kindergartens to work in tandem with the school teachers.

<sup>5</sup> In a 2008 report commissioned by Children’s Services Division, Prof. Gordon Cleveland (University of Toronto), justified this choice by stating that: *“In theory, and to a reasonable extent in practice, when competitive markets are working well, they compel producers to serve the public interest by providing goods and services that are efficiently produced, of reasonable quality, and at prices that are close to costs. However, child care markets fail to perform like this, for two reasons. First is the existence of a public interest in child care [since it affects the mother’s integration to the labor market]. Second is the inability of parents to make perfect judgments about the quality of child care on offer”.* (Cleveland, 2008, p. 3-4).

In the next section, we will then explore the actual state of affairs in the Ontario and Toronto child care sector which experimented these last decades of political changes. What we will see is that the commentary above expose part of the picture as recently elected governments and opposing parties have significantly influenced the recent changes in the child care system. However, at the same time, other actors show their importance in regulating this instability: the intermediary organizations.

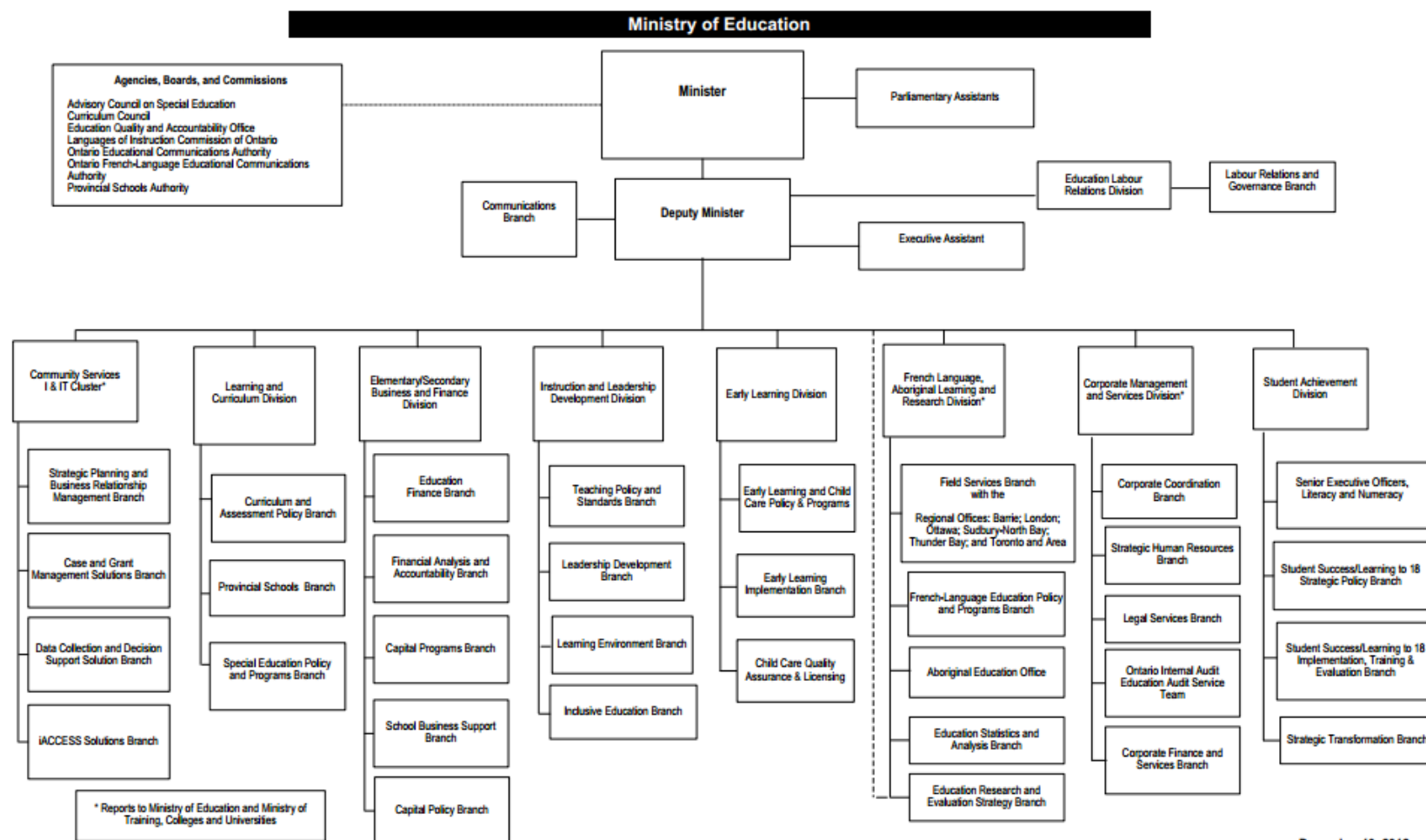
## **4. CURRENT PORTRAIT OF THE ONTARIO CHILD CARE NETWORK**

The recent implementation of the full-day kindergarten program, discussed above, has impacted in many ways child care organizations. In this section, we will give a brief portrait of the current reality of the child care system in both the province of Ontario and the City of Toronto which still suffer from a seemingly chronic funding problems and lack of sufficient space to serve their families. Furthermore, these issues have been accentuated by the current political context with the presence of a minority provincial government.

### **4.1 Ontario: the impact of full day kindergarten**

In Ontario, since 2012, the responsibility for child care development has been transferred from the Ministry of Child and Youth Services to the Ministry of Education. For that purpose, the Early Learning Division was created. This division has three main sections (Figure 1): Early Learning and Child Care Policy & Programs, Early Learning Implementation Branch, and Child Care Quality Assurance & Licensing. The implementation of the full day kindergarten (FDK) has been the main project of the division in the last year.

Figure 1 - Ministry of Education Organizational Chart



December 10, 2012

Source: Ministry of Education.

The original concept in Dr. Pascal's report recommended collaboration between a teacher and an ECE in planning and delivering the early learning activities in a space provided by schools and enjoyed by children from 7:30 until 18:00 with the integrated extended day program. However, in 2013, the full day kindergarten program still experienced some setbacks. According to a newspaper article<sup>6</sup>, there are financial and operational complications – for instance, uncertainty about programs during the summer break – which are causing problems in its provision. On their side, other participants, in our conversations, complained about the lack of support to ECEs and teacher in their collaboration.

The provincial government in 2011 changed the legislative requirement for School boards to directly deliver the full FDK program from 7AM to 6PM. Instead as a result of advocacy and pressure by school boards and community child care programs the legislation was changed to allow school boards to contract out their obligation to operate the before and after school component for FDK. This has resulted in continued fragmentation of the system, tested the relations between school teachers and ECE's and have created a part time sector of ECE's.

Furthermore, with the growing provincial government deficit, the costs of full day kindergarten have been an important subject for the conservative opposition which threatens to halt the development of the program. A member from the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care stated that *"the province has downloaded this program onto school boards who have side-loaded it to community-based child care and said, 'here, you do it'"*. A member of the AECEO explains:

*"The change from the initial seamless day approach to wrap-around care came about because too many child care operators were not given the funding/tools they needed to compensate for losing 4 and 5 year old from their programs. Another big factor was the reluctance of school boards to take on the responsibility of running child care in schools."*

In Ontario, the College of ECEs has registered in 2012 over 38,000 members, i.e. early childhood educators with a university or college diploma. According to Statistics Canada, the average wage for these professionals in 2010 was \$36,179, less than half of a teacher's annual income. With the introduction of full-day kindergarten, other problems affect the ECE income:

*"When the school closes at the holidays in December and then closes for the summer, early childhood educators are not entitled to apply for unemployment the way teachers can apply because they are considered seasonal workers or something. ECEs can't."*

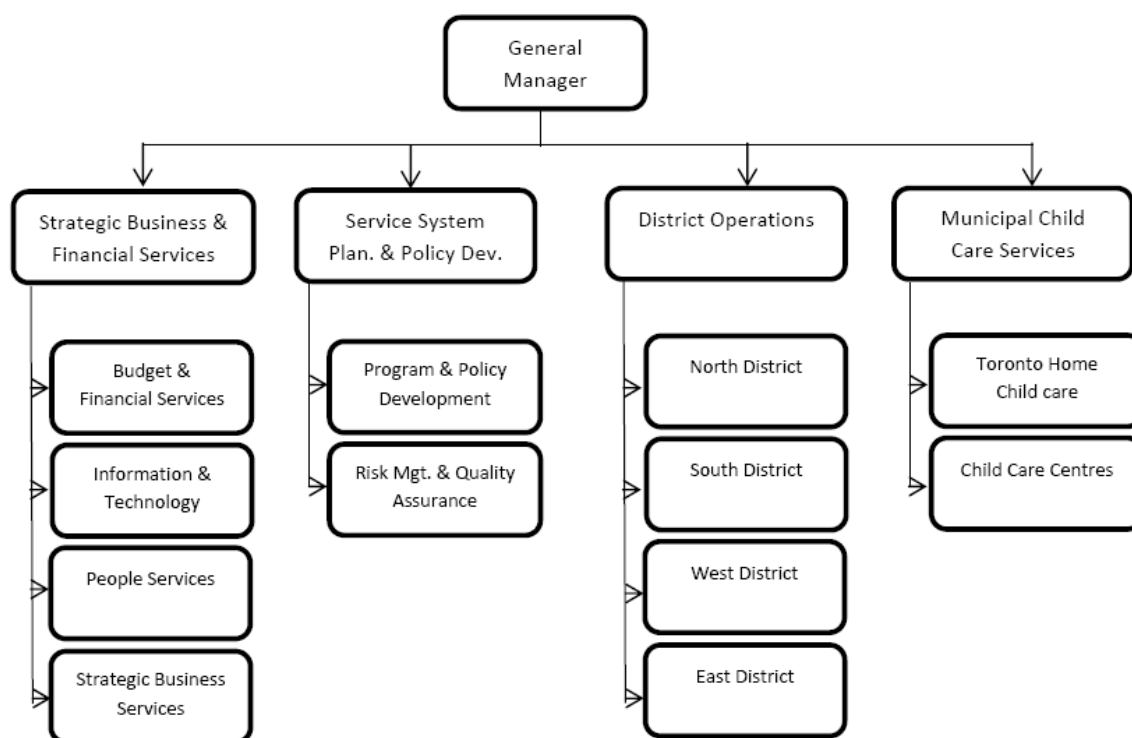
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<sup>6</sup> The Star "Ontario needs to fix another full-day kindergarten mess: Editorial" April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

## 4.2 Toronto: Children's Services Agency

In the City of Toronto, Children's Services is the agency responsible for child care. As of 2013, its administrative structure comprised of four sectors (Figure 2). First, Strategic, Business and Financial Services is the sector responsible for division-wide strategic and support function. Second, Service System Planning and Policy Development provide overall planning, evaluation and monitoring to the integrated child care system. District Operations assist clients to access quality child care in the City of Toronto and determine eligibility for subsidized child care. Finally, Municipal Child Care Services operates the municipally-run child care operators.

**Figure 2 – City of Toronto's Children's Services Organizational Chart**



Source: Toronto Children's Services

In 2012, the City of Toronto had 922 licensed child care centres (Table 1) and 21 licensed private home care agencies working with over 2,000 approved home care providers. The City of Toronto agency, Children's Services, directly operate 52 (5.6%) child care centres and 1 home child care agency, while there are 631 (68.4%) non-profit and 239 (25.9%) commercial child care organizations. In total, these centers offer 55,656 licensed child care spaces, from which around 24,000 are subsidized to low-income families. This roughly covers 28% of Toronto's children

aged 0-6 years. Finally, Toronto also lacks approximately 2,000 spaces for children with special needs.

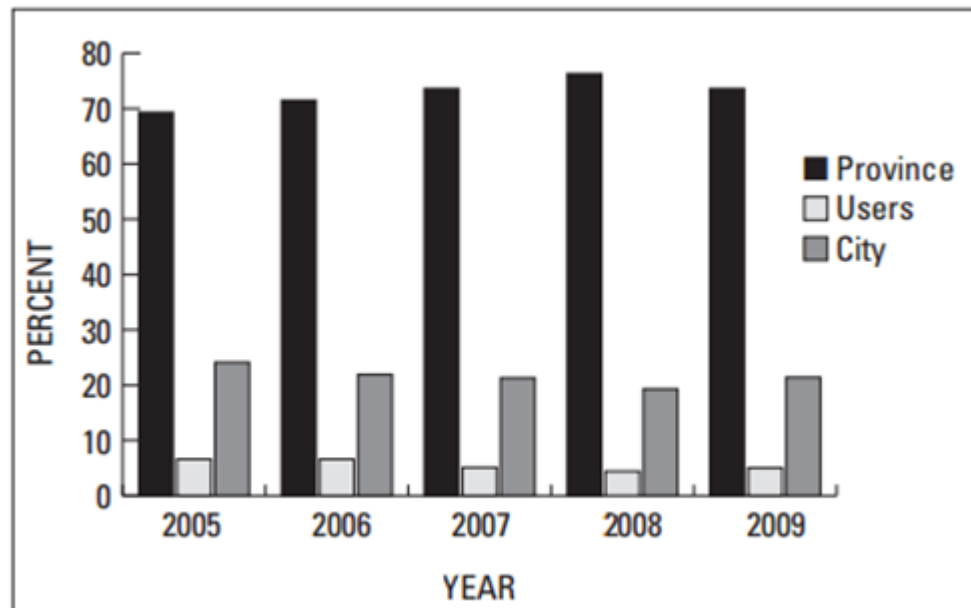
**Table 1 – 2012 Toronto child care organizations and spaces**

Centre-based care	# of centres	%	Infant spaces	Toddler spaces	Preschool spaces	Full-Day Kindergarten spaces	School age spaces	Total spaces
Municipal	52	5.6%	344	560	1,305	40	421	2,670
Non-profit	631	68.4%	1,447	4,073	16,477	2,279	13,361	37,637
Commercial	239	25.9%	1,060	2,769	9,191	40	2,289	15,349
<b>Total</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,851</b>	<b>7,402</b>	<b>26,973</b>	<b>2,359</b>	<b>16,071</b>	<b>55,656</b>

Source: Children's Services Division Fact Sheet – December 2012.

According to the Toronto Child Care Service Plan 2010-2014<sup>7</sup>, Ontario provincial government provides around 80% of the existing fund to the subsidized child care system with the rest being covered by the City of Toronto (see figure 3 for funding sources from 2005 until 2009). The total of public funding amounts to 365.5 million dollars which, like mentioned before, doesn't cover all the system costs. It has to be complemented by parents' contribution, which represents approximately 4% of the subsidized system costs, about \$18.2 million in revenue (see Table 2 for average public fees in the year 2010), and other unofficial sources.

**Figure 3 – Funding sources for subsidized child care (2005-2009)**



Source: Toronto Child Care Service Plan 2010-2014.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the data collected by Children's Services is based on centres that have a service contract with the City of Toronto, and are eligible to receive subsidies, around 68% of the system.

These funds are used by the city of Toronto to provide a subsidy to families who can't afford the full cost of child care. So while the cost of child care for a toddler space may be as high as 85.06 dollars (see figure 5 below), parents who can't afford that daily fee can request a fee subsidy. They pass an income test prescribed by the Ontario government and applied by the City of Toronto, and, for the families who are eligible, they will receive a subsidy for a portion of their fee, depending on their net income. The parents then pay what they are deemed eligible for directly to the operator, and the City of Toronto pays the difference to the operator.

**Table 2 – 2013 Daily Public Fees in Toronto**

	<i>Low range</i>	<i>Mid range</i>	<i>High range</i>
<b>Age group</b>			
Infant	62.00	77.25	95.56
Toddler	48.00	60.00	85.06
Pre-School	36.55	44.69	65.00
<b>Full-Day Kindergarten</b>			
Before and After School	25.33	31.00	45.00
Before School	11.77	18.00	18.00
After School	18.44	25.80	27.00
Summer Camp	36.00	44.15	50.35

Source: Toronto Children's Services "Early Learning and Care in Toronto – Summer 2013".

According to Children's Services Statistics (see table 6 below), as of September 2013, there were 23,431 subsidized places in the city of Toronto, for different age groups: Infants 2,024, Toddlers 3,347, Pre-School 4,663, Junior Kindergarten 3,220, Senior Kindergarten 2,462, and School-Age 7,535.



**Table 3 – Subsidized child care places in Toronto: Delivery Type (September 2013)**

	Delivery Type												Total
	Purchased					Public							
	Group Centres	Home Child Care	SCH	York B&A	Auspice Total	Group Centres	Home Child Care	Auspice Total	Group Centres	Home Child Care	SCH	York B&A	
Funding													
Regular	16,740	1,724	6	206	18,676	2,044	614	2,658	18,784	2,338	6	206	21,334
Ontario Works	1,649	232	.	.	1,881	131	85	216	1,780	317	.	.	2,097
Total	18,389	1,956	6	206	20,557	2,175	699	2,874	20,564	2,655	6	206	23,431
Age Group													
Infant	1,416	211	.	.	1,627	338	59	397	1,754	270	.	.	2,024
Toddler	2,535	242	.	.	2,777	492	78	570	3,027	320	.	.	3,347
Preschool	3,745	294	.	.	4,039	542	82	624	4,287	376	.	.	4,663
J.K.	2,625	251	1	.	2,877	248	95	343	2,873	346	1	.	3,220
S.K.	2,175	206	5	.	2,386	178	78	256	2,353	284	5	.	2,642
Schoolage	5,893	752	.	206	6,851	377	307	684	6,270	1,059	.	206	7,535
Total	18,389	1,956	6	206	20,557	2,175	699	2,874	20,564	2,655	6	206	23,431

Source: Children's Services Division.

Obs: York B&amp;A – The York Before and After School Program for school-aged children in the former City of York incorporated to the City of Toronto in 1998.

At the time, according to the same source (see table 4 below), there are now 19,113 children waiting for subsidy in different age groups: Infant 5,363, Toddler 2,641, Pre-School 3,282, Kindergarten 3,200, and School-Age 4,627. These numbers are evaluated according to each city of Toronto ward and “in order to equitably distribute the limited number of subsidy spaces” among them, Children’s services established a ward equity target based on the proportion of low-income children in each sector.

**Table 4 – Subsidized child care places in Toronto: Age Group (September 2013)**

	Age Group					All
	Infant	Toddler	Pre-School	Kindergarten	School-Age	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,343</b>	<b>2,644</b>	<b>3,283</b>	<b>3,223</b>	<b>4,667</b>	<b>19,160</b>

Source: Children’s Services Division.

These subsidies only apply to around 600 child care operators which have a subsidy contract with the city of Toronto. In child care centers, who are not in contract with City of Toronto Children’s Services and who are therefore not eligible to subsidies, parents have to cover the full amount of the cost of child care. According to the OCBCC, half of the families in Ontario have no fee subsidies and pay around \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year per child.

Due to the persistent underfunding of the subsidized child care program and lack of indexation of the current resources, the City has to resort to some alternative finance to maintain the current services, like the Child Care Expansion Reserve originally created to build more child care spaces. Since Best Start and the transfer of child care in 2010 from MCYS to Education, the province and the City has provided municipal service system managers child care funding. However it continues to be insufficient given the inflation and the non-indexation of these funds. The continuous implementation of the program of full day kindergarten since 2010<sup>8</sup>, like mentioned before in this research, has potential ramification for the delivery of child care services. Particularly, actors would expect an increase in fees to families since younger children’s care is more costly to provide for child care centers.

In 2011, Toronto municipal government hired KPMG to offer a plan to address the City’s deficit. Concerning child care, according to CUPEs website and Toronto local media<sup>9</sup>, the recommendations went from privatization to cut in basic services. In general KPMG suggested: transferring child care centres operated directly by the City to non-profit or commercial

<sup>8</sup> Phase 4, which should occur in 2013-14, would have almost 75% of the children enrolled in the full day kindergarten program.

<sup>9</sup> City News Toronto “Core Services Review Part 3: KPMG suggests cuts to daycare, long-term care homes” July 13 2011.

operation to reduce costs; terminating City inspections of subsidized child care centres thus leaving child care licencing and quality control to the province; cutting the 2000 subsidized child care spaces that are subsidized 100% by the City; reducing the maximum subsidized per diem rates to levels near the average rates of non-profit providers; and eliminating “Child Care Funding and Subsidies” costs which currently includes pay equity wage subsidies, funding for special needs children, and the Family Resource Centre. These recommendations were put forward by Mayor Rob Ford, however the City Council reversed the proposed cuts of subsidized child care places and directed the Children’s Services Division to assign \$3.8 million of the child care budget to fund fee subsidies for 264 new child care places.

The case of KPMG recommendations shows us that, despite a certain impetus for budget cuts and privatization, there are many actors who work to defend these services and fight for more funding and support for child care operators. In the next section, we will present these intermediary organizations and their role in advocating and supporting child care services and the early childhood education profession in the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto.



## 5. MAIN ACTORS IN ONTARIO AND TORONTO CHILD CARE NETWORK

In this section we will present the main actors of the Ontario and Toronto child care network studied in our research. We will begin by a short presentation of their history which will allow placing them in the wider picture of the history of child care in the province. We will follow with an examination of their specific role inside the network, the relationship that they maintain (or not) with other actors of the field, and their impact on operators management practices. This presentation will provide a clearer portrait of the complex dynamic of the sector and give us the foundation on which to expose its influence in the co-construction and coproduction of governmental policies.

### 5.1 Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario

The Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (henceforth AECEO), alongside its francophone counterpart the *Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario* (AFÉSEO), is the Ontario professional association for RECEs. It was created in 1950 originally as the Nursery Education Association of Ontario, and changed to its current name in 1969. Built as an answer to the lack of public regulation and training facilities for early childhood education staff, from the beginning, the AECEO was involved in the professionalization of early childhood education. It fostered the creation and evaluation of specialized university programs<sup>10</sup>, the production of reference literature in the area and the establishment of a code of ethics for their members' practice<sup>11</sup>. Alongside this work, AECEO works also for the recognition of the profession before the provincial and municipal governments as well as the wider public.

*"The association represents registered early childhood educators. We speak on behalf of the profession regardless of whether they choose to join the association. The work that we do includes advocacy, the provision of ongoing professional learning, research and the drafting of positions on issues and topics affecting RECEs and we provide leadership opportunities at the community and provincial level. Regardless of where an RECE works the AECEO will support them."*

Structurally, AECEO is considered *"a member-driven organization with elected voluntary Branch Chairs and a Provincial Board of Directors"*. The Branch Chairs act as a liaison for local members and the provincial AECEO. Currently there are 24 branches in Ontario that provide networking

<sup>10</sup> The most recent publicly-available statistics on the percentage of trained child care educators in Ontario was based on 2005 CCHRSC study which indicated 69% of centre-based ECEs and assistants with postsecondary credentials in Ontario: around 17,690 with a certificate or a diploma and 4,350 with a degree (Beach & Costigliola, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> For a more complete history of the AECEO, see "AECEO History – A Review of Our Milestones": [http://www.aeceo.ca/files/user\\_files/AECEO\\_Milestones.pdf](http://www.aeceo.ca/files/user_files/AECEO_Milestones.pdf).

opportunities and local activity for members of the Association. Their focus is the registered early childhood educator (RECE).

*"In the beginning the AECEO's membership was broader and included individuals working in the early learning and care sector i.e. educational assistants, early childhood assistants and supporters of the field. With the establishment of the CECE it became important for the association to focus specifically on supporting the RECE professional."*

The provincial board is elected annually by the members of the Association. The board is primary responsibility is to provide direction around strategic decisions of the group. However, while it has the authority to respond and make decisions on behalf of the membership, members of the association declare that it is not uncommon for the board to consult the membership-at-large in decisions that will affect more profoundly the profession.

*"Our bylaws call for Annual General Meetings where members are informed of the activity and financials for the past year. We prepare an annual report as well that is distributed to the general membership. At these annual meetings members vote on member motions brought forward and elect the incoming slate of officers to the board. We also involve members in decision making through various means of consultation. For example, we hold face-to-face consultation meetings at the branch level and distribute online surveys regularly. We also release policy discussion papers to collect member feedback. Another more indirect way we gather feedback is through individual member requests and questions directed to the provincial board of directors."*

The board has also other tasks to perform inside the AECEO structure. These charges include, for example representing the profession at various consultation tables including government and community, disseminating information on the importance of early childhood education to the public (especially parents), promoting research, developing positions and providing ongoing learning for members, among other responsibilities.

The AECEO works collaboratively with a number of sector stakeholders such as training institutions, community resource centres, municipalities, and more, to develop professional learning and networking opportunities for their members in activities such as provincial and regional conferences, forums, and Institutes. For example, in 2008, a Leadership and Capacity Building project, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, enabled the AECEO to travel across the province with the goal of fostering leaders amongst early childhood educators. The integration of practitioners and academic stakeholders, amongst other diverse backgrounds, is an important characteristic of the AECEO structure.

*"The AECEO has a set of criteria that is used when recruiting volunteer members to the provincial board of directors. This criteria includes but is not limited to, representation from across the province as well as a cross section of work experience for example academics, researchers, practitioners, directors of multi-service agencies, supervisors etc. We do this to ensure we are able to speak for and represent a broad cross-section of Registered Early Childhood Educators. This diversity helps our decision making process by ensuring that decisions encompass multiple perspectives within the sector and also encourages consensus building. It does not hinder the decision making process; although it may take a bit longer to come to a decision than it would if all board members were from the same background and of the same mindset, the decisions that result from this diversity of viewpoints are more effective."*

Prior to the establishment of the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), the Association acted as a voluntary regulatory body in the province. In that role, the AECEO developed positions and resources on many areas like ECE training, best practices and quality assurance. The association also constructed a code of ethics for its members.

*"The AECEO's Code of Ethics was developed in the early 90's by a committee of volunteer members and other stakeholders with a vast background of experience. The work of this committee was then vetted through our members, college/university ECE faculty, as well as leaders and stakeholders in the sector. We were able to encompass most if not all the various aspects of ECE work, philosophy, principals and values this way."*

When the College of ECE, following its mandate, began developing a Code of Ethics for their registered members, they took stock of what existed already in the sector. Their research included a similar document created years before by the Association<sup>12</sup>. Nowadays the CECE Code is the only officially recognized document used to regulate early childhood educators' profession.

The most significant accomplishment for the AECEO in the last decade was advocating for legislative recognition of ECEs which lead to the establishment of the College of Early Childhood Educators in 2007. The association had advocated for a regulatory body for almost 30 years before it finally came to fruition. Hundreds of volunteer AECEO members pushed government and elected officials to enact the legislation that created this new regulatory body for the ECE profession. According to the AECEO 2006-2007 report:

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<sup>12</sup> The following is taken from the "Acknowledgement" page of the CECE Code of Ethics document: *"Two documents were considered early in the standards development process: the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario's (AECEO) Code of Ethics and the Code éthique of the Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario (AFÉSEO). With the consent of the AECEO and the AFÉSEO, certain elements of the College's Code of Ethics were inspired by these documents".*

*“The birth of the College of ECEs could not have been accomplished without the commitment and expertise of many past and present AECEO members. Over the years, there have been countless volunteer hours and resources dedicated to promoting the College. This has been done through the creation of models of standards of practice policies and processes, letter campaigns, visits with politicians, public presentations and petitions, to name just a few. None of this could have been possible without our members.”*

One of the more significant changes to affect the AECEO, as a result of CECE’s establishment, was the transfer of responsibility for equivalency services. In fact, since 1964, AECEO was responsible for not only developing but also delivering equivalency services for the province of Ontario. This service involved the assessment of credentials and work experience of individuals who had received their ECE training from out of the province and the country. The AECEO’s equivalency process was unique in that it included a prescription component that directed applicants to the precise gap training they needed. Finally, the association also integrated what is called Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) as a component of the process which, alongside formal education, recognized the knowledge gained from work experience. According to one AECEO member:

*“The biggest change to the equivalency process, once the responsibility was handed over to the regulatory body, is the absence of the Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) component in the assessment. Today, individuals with experience but no credentials and/or internationally trained ECE professionals who do not want to complete the entire 2 year college program can ask to have their experience and past education assessed through a PLAR process at an Ontario Community College. This can prove quite costly and the results of the assessment can vary from college to college, as there is no standardized model being used in the province. The AECEO’s equivalency was subsidized by government, from time to time, and included one on one support throughout for each individual while in the process.*

The AECEO, at the time, was also instrumental in developing a course targeted specifically to applicants trained outside of Canada. This course titled “Early Childhood Education in the Canadian Context” helped bridge the gap between ECE practice experienced abroad and in Ontario. With the responsibility for equivalency in Ontario transferred to the College of Early Childhood Educators in March 2010, the onus of correcting the gap in terms of training is now the responsibility of the individual.

*“We have learned from the CECE that the responsibility of meeting the requirements for entry into the College is on the applicant. The CECE’s primary responsibility is to set standards of practice, licensing and hold members accountable to the public. It does not facilitate licensing if the individual is lacking recognized credentials.”*



With a regulatory body in place, the AECEO now focuses exclusively on supporting the RECE. As registered professionals ECEs have standards of practice and code of ethics they must follow. There is also a Continuous Professional Learning requirement being developed by the College that will be put into effect in fall 2014. According to one board member, the AECEO strive to provide the supports and resources needed to maintain licensure in the College: *“We are looking at creating our own professional learning framework in collaboration with the college. [...] We want to be part of the process of insuring that quality is at its utmost.”*

Despite their different roles and goals in the child care sector, the relationship between the AECEO and the College of ECEs is considered a positive one by association members. Today, according to an AECEO member, there is ongoing consultation and dialogue that happens between the two groups: “we take part in all sector/stakeholder consultation sessions and meet regularly with the Council Executive and staff”. CECE and AECEO also share information that is helpful to their respective members. According to the AECEO, the relationship with the CECE is one that is based on mutual respect in terms of recognition of the different roles they play in the ECE sector. Despite their obvious differences, many RECE’s are still not clear on the differing roles played by the two organizations:

*“Currently, there is still much confusion among RECE professionals and others in the sector as to how the two bodies differ. Many still believe we are one and the same. There have been extensive education campaigns to try and correct this but hopefully time will help solve this.”*

The AECEO works closely and collaborates with many like-minded organizations and agencies, including the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF), Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC), the Common Table for Childhood Development and Care in Ontario, Family Supports Institute Ontario, Home Child Care Association Ontario, and many others. One of the longest ongoing AECEO partnerships has been with the OCBCC:

*“The AECEO and OCBCC have different mandates but do work together on advocacy campaigns from time to time. The Coalition’s mandate is to advocate for quality, accessible child care for all of Ontario’s children while the AECEO’s is to represent and support the ECE professional. Our two mandates do cross over from time to time around the issue of trained staff as an indicator of quality programming. We also partner on community forums and meetings from time to time.”*

The AECEO nevertheless has an important advocacy role inside the Ontario child care network. Association members, in fact, participated actively in the process of consultation which culminated on Prof. Pascal report <sup>13</sup> on the full-day learning program. The organization helped organize a forum on June 2008 where the theme was discussed with other stakeholders. Also, a full-day Institute series was offered, in partnership with multiple provincial and community groups and organizations, throughout the province “to encourage dialogue and collaborative planning regarding key recommendations” in Pascal’s report.

The Association also frequently plays a key consultation role to provincial government. Representatives from the association sit on the Early Learning Advisory committees set up by the Ontario Ministry of Education. In its advocacy function, AECEO participates in many public meetings and campaigns with other sector stakeholders, discussing the impact of provincial policy and programs on the early learning and care workforce and the children and families they serve.

*“Today the AECEO plays a much bigger consultative role to the provincial government than it has in the past. We are a part of advisory groups, are asked to participate in public meetings and discussion tables and have been called on for our expertise in RECE training during the implementation of the full day kindergarten teaching team. The heightened interest at the provincial level in the benefits of early learning and care has helped bring focus to organizations like the AECEO.”*

With the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten, RECEs hired to work for the school board were required to become unionized. The relationship between the AECEO and the various unions that represent RECEs is a fairly new one. With the unionization of RECEs working in classrooms the likelihood of collaboration between these unions and the professional association around workforce issues is increased.

*“Prior to FDK the AECEO did not have a relationship with the unions representing RECES. Only a small percentage of the RECE workforce in child care settings belonged to a union prior to the implementation of FDK therefore the association took responsibility for educating members and the profession as a whole about unions and how they function. Today, we are fortunate to have ongoing dialogue with many of the unions in the province.”*

Finally, the AECEO strives to maintain a presence amongst at the community level through the existence of member branches. These branches provide members with the opportunities to come

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<sup>13</sup> As mentioned above (see p. 14) this report was the product of the demand of provincial government, which appointed Dr. Charles Pascal as its Early Learning Advisor, for a new full-day early learning program. After consultation with many actors of the Ontario child care network, the report recommended that the Ministry of Education took responsibility for a new kindergarten program for four- and five years-old children as part of the public school system, as well as a municipal service delivery of care for children aged zero to three.

together as colleagues and engage in activities and discussion concerning their profession. The AECEO assists its volunteer community leaders by providing them with the support and resources they need to engage local members.

## 5.2 College of Early Childhood Educators

The College of Early Childhood Educators (henceforth The College) was created in 2007 under the “Early Childhood Educators Act”, and officially opened in 2008. The arrival of the College, according to network actors, was a mixed blessing for the ECE workers in Ontario. On one hand, experience and educated ECEs welcomed the recognition and the growth in training standards that this new institution brought to child care. Many actors in the network saw the creation of the ECE as the symbol of the respect of ECEs by establishing and controlling professional standards and assuring accountability before the public. However, for other ECEs, the College brought along many difficulties to exercising their profession, besides the new membership fee. According to one member:

*“What I like to think is that, because there was no accountability for forever, until recently there were many people working in childcare that didn’t have any training at all and they didn’t want that to change; they wanted to continue working without having the training. And it’s those people that were the most upset.”*

The College was established in 2007 through a transitional committee which comprised of actors from the child care community and members of the government. The AECEO was predominantly present: *“It’s supposed to be 14 people who are elected to the council by their peers, other ECEs. [...] Of those 14 there were 8 who were members of the Association”*. Now all early childhood educators, for all age groups including the private sector, have to be members of the College to practise their profession though to be accepted certain requirements are demanded.

*“To be a member you need to apply and you need to verify that you have a community college diploma in ECE or a degree in ECE<sup>14</sup> from a university that the college has approved those programs, you need to demonstrate that you don’t have a criminal record and you need to make a commitment to joining the college, to holding the*

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<sup>14</sup> There are two diplomas for ECEs: the diploma in Early Childhood Education from an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) or a diploma/degree from a program listed on the College of ECEs’ Approved Post-Secondary Programs list (Bertrand et al., 2011).

*standards and you pay a fee. So the people, really, chose to come to the college<sup>1516</sup> to become members, but there is a selection criteria based on academics standings.”*

The College is now governed by a council which meet four times a year in open sessions. It is formed by 14 elected members and 10 public members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council: *“They cannot be registered childhood educators, but they might be nurses, or they might be accountants, they could be anybody. Those people are appointed by the government usually for about a 2 or 3 year term”*. The Council also have 5 statutory committees: executive, complaints, discipline, fitness to practice, and registration appeals. The complaints, discipline, and fitness to practice committees are responsible for the complaint process inside the College.

There are also four non-statutory committees: registration, nominating, election, and standards of practice. The committee on standards of practice particularly advises the Council on the development of the code of ethics and standards of practice for ECEs. According to a member of the College, most strategic decisions (budget, standards, professional learning) are made by the council who would sometimes reach to their membership to get information and feedback on specific programs.

*“For instance, we’re working on our continuous professional learning<sup>17</sup> right now so we’ve gone out to our members and done some focus groups and we might, through our website, ask people to give us some feedback on what they think is important or we might send out a draft of something and say well send us a paper on this or we do a focus group, that kind of thing. So in our decision making we do pay attention to our members and to our stakeholders, but really, ultimately the decision is made by council.”*

Regulatory body for the ECE profession, the College protects the public interest by controlling quality standards in ECE practices. Its main tasks are limited to upholding requirements for registration as an ECE worker in Ontario, establishing standards of practice and a code of ethics for the profession, and investigating any complaints brought forth by the public and eventually disciplining its members. As such, the College explicitly states that advocacy for the profession is not part of its goals.

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<sup>15</sup> According to the College of ECEs, there are certain categories which are not required to register such as: a teacher or teaching assistant, an ECE apprentice or a person with an early childhood assistant (ECA) certificate, a private-home day care visitor, among others.

<sup>16</sup> In its 2011-2012 annual report, CECE members made a “conservative projection of 43,000 Certificates of Registration issued by June 2013”.

<sup>17</sup> In the spring 2013, the CECE published a “Draft Design, Implementation Process and Member Resources for the Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) Program”. According to this document, the CPL program uses a self-improvement model which seeks to provide members “with opportunities for self-reflection, self-directed learning and personalized decision-making about enhancing their professional practice”.

*“So we can say that, what we can’t say is you should be paying them better money because that’s really not our venue. So we would then look to our friends, for instance, at AECEO because they can say you need to be paying people more money, you need to be doing that kind of recognition, they can promote profession, we can only promote the public interest. So we can say some of that stuff and what we say to our members is, no we can’t tell people to pay you more money, but the more we establish our profession as credible, unique and recognised, then the more chance that we will be paid appropriately will follow. But we have to be careful [...] that we aren’t seen to be advocating for the profession.”*

This aspect certainly limits the kind of partnerships the College can establish with other child care organizations. There is constant concern in establishing relation with other institutions while maintaining distance from advocacy activities: *“We don’t really work in partnership that way with anybody else [...]. If we started that we would be seen to be acting on behalf of the profession instead of protecting the public interest”*. In that sense, according to a College member, the great preoccupation is to maintain the focus on their main mission.

*“The challenge for the college is that our mandate is in that legislation and our mandate is to protect the public interest so we have to be very careful when we are doing business that we are always thinking of protecting the public interest, not thinking of protecting the professional interest. And we know that around the world and in our province, if the government thinks that we are protecting the professional interest instead of protecting the public interest they will come back to us and say this is not your business and either we’re going to send somebody to help you do your business or, in British-Columbia for instance, the college of teachers out there was disbanded and the government took over licensing teachers. So it’s a fine balance for us, but at our college we have really amazing members and we hold them to a high standard and they want to be held to that standard. So they know that by protecting the public interest we are raising the awareness of the importance of our profession and raising the standard of practice so for the most part we’ve been, I think, very successful in being able to maintain that balance.”*

In reference to their relationship with the government, the College of ECEs have direct contact with public officials. As a part of a governmental regulatory body, members of the College have the right to participate in the discussions of provincial child care policies that will affect the ECE profession. This was the case in the recent discussion about the implementation of the program of full-day learning for 4 and 5 year-old children.

*“We have direct contact with the Ministry of Education. We are involved with their policies and with their planning people. When they are looking at developments around staffing for their kindergartens or they’re talking about childcare, we have a direct link*

*with them, and work with them in that way. [...] For instance, it was recently a legislation that was being implemented, about full day kindergartens, we presented to the provincial legislature, and we had a presentation to say: from the college of early childhood educator's perspective you need to be sure that you only hire registered members etc... So we do both but more often we sit on provincial committees and work directly with Ministry of Education staff."*

The College, as mentioned in the above citation, was directly involved in the consultations about the Early Learning Program. College representatives were in contact with MPPs and both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services discussing and submitting proposals regarding amendments, by-laws and policies which affected early childhood education. Their goal in these processes is to ensure that the role of the College as a regulatory body is further acknowledged, in particular concerning respect of the requirements it established for certifying ECEs.

*"So right now our government is looking at changing the laws around child care programs and childcare service. We work with the government but in a very particular area because only members of our college can practice in our profession. When the government is going to change any legislation that has to do with our members we are there to make sure that our members are recognised and that the government and the legislation recognises and supports that only our members can practice in the profession, that only our members can call themselves ECEs. [...] When we introduce early childhood educators into the classrooms, we can talk to the Ministry of education and say: our ECEs, this is their scope of practice, this is what they can do, they need to be equal members with your teachers, because they are professionals and here are the standards they have. And you need to be sure that you only hire registered early childhood educators."*

The College also defends a transition to full-day learning that assures a co-operation between teachers and ECEs that doesn't thwart their status and professional values. For instance, in a submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy in reference to the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law, the College supports "the requirement for collaboration" amongst the two groups of workers while suggesting that it is important *"to establish a professional team of teachers and early childhood educators, working side by side, on equal footing"*. Furthermore, it also recommends a control of the ratio of qualified staff and that *"for young children, it is important to emphasize that education is "play-based"."*

For follow-ups and debates on this and other issues, the College keeps a seasonal newsletter. The communication with members mainly includes changes on the early childhood education context and their impacts on ECEs as well as suggestions on how to react to them. The newsletter also

informs the members about the College's role and its activities which involve registration, professional practice, communications, government relationship, and complaints.

The College code of ethics was inspired by the document produced by the AECEO. The code and the standards of practice were built through a development process starting in 2009 which included consultation and feedback from many focus groups including members of the College, parents, scholars, government, other stakeholders, and the public. After the first draft was also analyzed and validated by the aforementioned actors, the College finally adopted the documents on the beginning of 2011.

The College, as mentioned above, also inherited the equivalency process formerly performed by the AECEO. This process became a sensitive issue between the two institutions, since the College changed the criteria for accepting outside educators. Nowadays the focus changed from valuing the acquired experience to an all-academic requirement. Behind this change, according to members of the College, is the perspective of the protection of the public interest:

*"In the establishment of the college, our legislation, the ECE Act, talks about the scope of practice and the skill set of early childhood educators and the college believes there is a requirement in order to practice in this profession. And to understand and to have knowledge you do need an academic requirement to do that. [...] I think the college's perspective is: in order to really protect the public interest, we need to be sure that people who practice, people who are members really do understand that the standard childhood development predates learning and that can implement that in very professional practice way. The work the Association use to do in the equivalency, it was work that was done that was bigger than the protection of public interest and as one would expect and hope their professional organizations support their profession. So there was a whole lot of work and support that was being done in this support of the profession that the college has other purposes in identifying your academic standard is to make sure that you need minimum standard to become a member. When we took over that from the Association, part of it is because we had to because it's passed to us in our legislation. We didn't have the same philosophical approach, because we are a regulatory body in the public interest, not a professional organization that supports the profession."*

The relationship with other child care organizations is limited to the exchange of information and mutual consultations over policies and research about child care work and labour market. This is the case with both the CCHRSC and the CCCF where, for instance, their CECE staff would participate in their conferences, write papers or carry out presentations. However, there is no direct relationship with these organizations which are kept "at arm's length". With the unions, especially, the CECE is restricted to an informative role:

*“We had interactions with unions only to tell them: here is what the college is, here’s what the scope of practice is, here is what our members can do, and here is how we hold them accountable and that kind of thing. Other than that we haven’t had a real relationship with them.”*

Finally, in terms of the College future, after various stakeholder meetings, the council board recently established five different strategies. First, they plan to establish a pre-service quality control over post-secondary ECE programs. Second, the board members intend to create a culture of self-regulation amongst ECE members. Third, they want to create a communication strategy about the College and its role to the general public. Fourth, they will strive to build relationships with other important actors to enhance their recognition. Finally, they want to implement a continuous professional learning.

*“We are just in the process of establishing one of the requirements of membership and that will be continuous professional learning. Our members will be required, in order to maintain their membership, to participate in some activities in our continual professional learning. We haven’t finished establishing that yet, so we may present some of that ourselves. We may be looking to our colleagues, academics or professional associations to provide some of that training or we may to a bit of the whole approach where there is all kinds of different opportunities. So the service that we provide will be to outline what we expect of them for best practice and for continual professional learning and then making sure that those opportunities are available for all of our members regardless of where they live in the province. And again we might do some of those ourselves or we might do some of that in partnership. And my guess is that as we roll that out we will be doing that in partnership.”*

### **5.3 Ontario Ministry of Education**

The Ontario Child care network has been assigned to three different ministries in the last ten years. First, when child care was seen as a welfare program and the government’s role was to help low income families afford childcare, the service was attached to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. When Dalton McGuinty was elected prime minister in 2003, he created a new ministry, a Ministry of Children and Youth Services, which overtook the child care issue. In 2007, Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Prof. Pascal from the Atkinson Centre of the University of Toronto as his special advisor on Early Learning.

It was Pascal’s 2009 report, *“With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario”*, which prompted the implementation of full-day learning in Ontario. In 2010, the provincial government began to officially implement the full-day early learning programs offered



to four- and five years-old as part of the public education system. The program is part of comprehensive policy, to be realised over time, which is expected to cover children education up to 12 years-old (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

With that program, since 2012, child care was officially moved to the Ministry of Education which took the role of developing the child care policies and services which were before responsibility of the Ministry of Child and Youth Services. Generally, actors in the child care network welcomed this change as a sign of further recognition of the issue and the profession.

*“So for us, this is big. Because education, that’s how we wanted to fund it, it made sense, there is a per child contribution by the government. And that’s why it took universal program and everyone has access. So we think that the prospect of improving childcare funding has never been better in Ontario. So it’s just really just in January (2012), the last piece of childcare was transferred over. So literally, now, the Ministry of education has everything. It was a slow transfer.”*

In 2012, the Ministry of Education published a discussion paper “Modernizing Child Care in Ontario” which seeks feedback from child care network organization to construct a long-term plan for child care. Some of the issues discussed in the paper, in response to stakeholders’ demands, were the integration of child care and full-day kindergarten, improving current legislation, inconsistency in quality across the province, further accountability. Some of the solutions to these problems put forward by the Ministry are: propose a new funding formula; promote child care spaces in schools; build a mandatory provincial program guideline; propose amendments to update current regulatory framework; and new methods of evaluating and licensing child care services. There was an immediate answer from all major actors in the provincial child care network.

## **5.4 City of Toronto (Children’s Services Agency)**

The City of Toronto was a pioneer municipality in terms of child care. Since the Second World War, the city took responsibility of a direct delivery of child care. Today, after the service realignment during the Mike Harris conservative government, the City of Toronto’s agency<sup>18</sup>, the Children’s Services division, is in charge of broader system planning for more than 900 public, commercial and non-profit child care operators. The Division itself delivers 52 childcare programs, a home childcare agency, as well a family support program contracted with other organizations. It also offers support to children with special needs in licensed child care. Finally,

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<sup>18</sup> Children’s Services report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee of the City Council.

Children's Services provide eligibility assessments and fee subsidies to parents who can't afford child care.

In order to accomplish its objectives, Children's Services has different units. The first takes care of the municipally-operated centers which has a management team but, in its strategic decisions, is governed by the city council. The Service Planning Unit is responsible for managing the planning and monitoring of all commercial, public and non-profit services for children and their families. Finally, there is also a sector in charge of broad policy development in addition to risk management and accountability.

Recently, the Children's Services Division underwent a "Service Efficiency Study" to identify actions to improve efficiency of service delivery generate overall savings. The general result of this work, conducted by Deloitte at the request of the City Manager, was that "Children's Services division is taking a disciplined approach to balance service system management and direct operations amidst funding challenges" (City of Toronto, 2013). The study furthermore recognizes the amount of human resources required to the agency's work while noticing the high quality of directly operated centers and the comparatively low cost of service system management.

The main change in the Agency in the last years was the separation of their main childcare advisory committee into a broad multi-sectorial child and family network that includes within its structure four child care specific advisory groups, one for each area of the city. This committee was created officially *"to monitor and advise the Mayor and City Council on policies, programs, strategies and actions to achieve a comprehensive system of integrated, inclusive and high quality services that will support best outcomes for Toronto's children"*. According to one member from Children's Services, this division strategy was decided in order to increase their exchanges with local child care centers throughout the city.

*"We really wanted to reach a broader audience. And, the city of Toronto is so large, and we have so many operators, that what we decided to do was divide it into four quadrants<sup>19</sup>. And, we do work with childcare centers as four quadrants. So we thought it made sense that we did advisory committees in each of those quadrants, led by a director within Children's Services, as an opportunity to have a further reach. And I think the results so far are showing that the numbers attending those sessions are far greater than they were when we had the one meeting."*

Provincial government is responsible for the legislative framework, policy and funding of child care which provides the framework for local planning and delivery by the City of Toronto. This allows the City to address the unique needs of its residents within a broader provincial context. The costs of subsidized child care services are mainly covered by the provincial program

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<sup>19</sup> Specifically the north, south, west, and east districts.

(around 80%) which is also responsible for the overall policy framework, funding allocated, and the licensing of operators. The City of Toronto takes charge of system planning and management and quality assurance<sup>20</sup>. However, according to Children's Services employees, they still have a lot of autonomy in determining the operational guidelines for the organizations and programs. In fact, the current implementation of the full-day learning project follows this general dynamic.

*"The direction is set by the provincial government. And in terms of implementation we may set our own policies as they are, relate to how we roll things out. So for example, we're currently involved in implementing full day kindergarten. I'm sure you've read about in Ontario. So we're working with operators to provide that wrap around care for four and five years old. But we're making our own local decisions based on our resources, of how best that's going to work for us."*

Besides the local autonomy, Children's Services have a working relationship with the provincial government. The Children's Services at the City of Toronto also has a seat in virtually every working group that discuss policy and program change and implementation. Moreover the Service managed to establish some permanent tables between the municipalities and the provincial government. One of the most important instruments in that effort is the Toronto-Ontario Consultation and Cooperation Agreement (TOCCA). Its goal is to increase the exchange between the two offices and guarantee a better coordination between regulations and projects in both government spheres.

Another role played by Children's Services in the creation and implementation of the full-day kindergarten program was through its pioneering work with Toronto First Duty. A partnership between the City of Toronto, Atkinson foundation, George Brown College, and a number of different agencies, it began in 2000 with a focus on the integration of kindergarten, child care, and family support. This work, followed and recorded by the organizations involved, created new tools like Foundation for Ontario's new emergent curriculum, child observation framework, amongst others. It also produced research material that influenced such policy as Ontario's Best Start strategy (2004), Pascal's report "Our Best Future in Mind" (2009), and the recent Ontario legislation on full-day kindergarten (2010).

*"(Toronto First Duty Project) set the vision for what the province now has implemented with the full day kindergarten. So when full day kindergarten was rolling out, really some of the decisions that they had to make was where was kindergarten going to sit? Was it going to sit with childcare? Or was it going to sit with kindergarten? Were ECEs going to be involved? Was it going to be a blended day of childcare and kindergarten?"*

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<sup>20</sup> The City of Toronto Children's Services plans and manages services like fee subsidy, wage subsidy, family resource centres, special needs resourcing, and summer day camps, while operating 58 child care organizations. In terms of quality, it assesses the condition of the services provided, publishes a public rating, and supervises internal business practices of child care centres.

*So, a lot of these decisions had to be made. And those were informed by the first duty project. So in fact, what they ended up doing was having the full day kindergarten operated by the school board with the addition of early childhood educators. So it's a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator who now offer the full day program. That the vision is then there was early childhood educators who provide that before and after school experience also. So the first duty project really helped inform that. It continues to, we continue to use the results and learnings of the Toronto First Duty as we move forward in Ontario again with looking at how we can better integrate services to serve all children right from prenatal up to age 12<sup>21</sup>. So that's where that project is. They'll be coming out with sort of a final report in the fall."*

With this background baggage, the provincial full-day kindergarten program, according to our interviews, has been mostly welcomed by Children's Services personnel. Our conversations revealed, in fact, that employees considered this project an important step forward in a system where they don't expect huge financial investments to fill the gap of more than 21,000 children sitting in the waiting list. Finally, through the program, Ontario's government is supposed to help child care centres in their transition especially since younger children education, which remains in these organizations, is comparatively much more expensive. According to one interviewee:

*"There's a reinvestment strategy now. And so the plan is, as four and five (years-old) move over into the school system, then we take that money, we reinvest it into our younger, more vulnerable, more expensive care. And that's infant, toddler, preschool. We don't have a lot of infant care, it's very expensive. So now we have the resources to actually do that. The provincial government, looking at that plan also has indicated that yes it's expensive to renovate; those are huge capital costs for infant rooms, toddler rooms. They've now have given us some money in order to do that."*

In order to certify the high quality of child care operators, Children's Services developed a qualitative assessment tool that reviews infant, toddler, preschool and school age care. It is the only validated tool, in Canada, for preschool where they test the assessors regularly to guarantee inter-rater reliability. This tool is now being validated, in a partnership with OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) at the University of Toronto, to validate the infant and the toddler program. According to employees at Children's Services, the tool was a community effort.

*"(The assessment tool) started with a community process. So, we brought the community together, talked about it. And then started looking at what are the key components, above and beyond our provincial licensing standards. So, these are quality indicators above just maintaining a license. It, talks about the interactions. It talks*

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<sup>21</sup> Toronto First Duty (TFD) helped inform the kindergarten model integration between teacher and ECEs. However, TFD went beyond this professional collaboration in the sense that it also integrated family support services with the help from family support staff and parents.

*about appropriate program planning. And what we did was, with the community, the quality assessment tool started as a self-assessment. [...] For each indicator, it has a criterion. So people can read and see what they have to develop in their own program in order to reach a certain assessments level. Then we moved from self-assessment to the operators could use it as assessing their own programs, seeking their training but then we we're going to actually score. And then we moved to those scores being put on the website. And now we know that with the quality ratings on the website, we're reaching 10 000 hits, a month on that. So people are looking at it. When you talk to parents in child's care and seeking childcare, they're certainly more informed. [...] We have a bulking of all of our programs at the high four rating. So we're working with (OISE) at UT. And they're saying "Ok so what distinguishes those programs in the high end?" there are some distinctions but you can't see them. We're in the process of working with the university, to develop a 5 point scale. So we're going to move that quality indicator even further."*

The assessment tool also serves to orient the training provided by Children's Services at the City of Toronto. The training is provided in a number of ways and directly delivered by child services staff, community partners and post-secondary institutions. Recently, Children's Services contracted with George Brown College which, for instance, offers a course on "Curriculum and Pedagogical leadership" about the ELECT (Early Learning for Every Child Today) program for early childhood workers. Besides quality assessment, other elements also guide the kind of material offered to their partners.

*"In terms of us and looking at our training needs, we look at the results of the quality assessment tool, and start looking at trends. We, we also look at, what we call serious occurrences, so childcare programs in the community have to report accidents, allegations of abuse, contentious issues. We look for trends through those reports as well. And then we try to fill the gap."*

The quality assurance is delivered by Children's Services to evaluate the level of quality provided in a child care program. The results are rated and provided to the public on the website. These public ratings assist families in choosing child care. Currently quality assessments are only conducted on programs with a fee subsidy contract with Children's Services. However, the Council gave the Division direction to provide these assessments to any child care program with a funding relationship with Children's Services. Although the provincial government provide the licence to an operator, when it meets the requirement of Day Nursery's Act, if they want to secure any public funding from, then they have to enter into a contract with the city of Toronto. According to employees, however, there is a rigorous process in order to receive a contract.

*"You have to do a business plan, you have to show financial viability, you have to show quality, and then every two years, we do a financial criteria, we do an administrative*

*criteria, we do the quality assessments tool that we were just talking about. And we're just in the process of rolling out governance criteria for non-profit childcare because the majority of our programs in the community are non-profit. So now we're providing them some support around governance criteria<sup>22</sup>."*

In fact, this process impact directly on the wages received by early childhood educators. An employee explains:

*"In their budget, we approve actual cost. So if you say you're going to provide a certain level of a salary, to a certain group of ECEs, we then through three or four observations ensure that the salaries you said you we're going to pay your employees, actually we're paid out. And if they weren't, then we do a recovery. And that helps. That helps with the quality and it helps with improving wages in the system."*

The City of Toronto is, through the pay equity commission, the comparator in terms of childcare salaries for programs located in the City of Toronto. In fact, Toronto, according to a 2010 survey, had the highest average hourly wages in Ontario for childhood educators: 16.21\$ per hour.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the wages in public, for profit and non-profit child cares centers are not regulated. However, according to a member of Children's Services, pay equity legislation requires the operators to augment salaries annually based on 1% of the previous year's salaries, which are included in the per diem each year. These increases in per diems are subject to Council approval. Also, many operators receive wage subsidies which can include: Direct Operating Grant (DOG), introduced in 1987 to increase salaries and benefits of staff while maintaining the affordability of services; Wage Enhancement Grant (WEG) introduced in 1991 so that licensed child care centres unable to meet Pay Equity Act requirements could increase compensation for employees; among others sources. For centres that have a fee subsidy contract, Children's Services request City Council support with an increase to the per diems.

There's another aspect of the distribution of public funding in the municipality of Toronto which steams also from the child care quality considerations. In fact, in a decision much applauded by most Ontario and Toronto child care intermediary organizations, the city council decided about a decade ago, that they would no longer support expansion of childcare in the commercial sector. This verdict creates a very different context for non-profit and private child care operators in Toronto.

*"If you are big box or you are a new commercial operator, when you get your licence and you ask for funding from the city, we cannot approve it. So that's how we're able to*

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<sup>22</sup> "The Governance Criteria measures the following areas: General Membership; Board Composition; Board Meetings; Annual General Meetings; Administrative Responsibilities; and Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct Policies and Procedures" (Children's Services, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.livingin-canada.com/salaries-for-early-childhood-educators-and-assistants.html>.

*address the commercial involvement and also to deal with the big box. We don't think the big box is actually going to have any influence here because they won't have public dollars available to them.*

Despite these positive elements, the City of Toronto remains lacking in terms of providing enough child care spaces for its children. In a 2006 report by Toronto Public Health (McKeown, 2006), there was 50,000 licensed child care spaces in Toronto (47,000 in centre-based child care programs and 3,000 in licensed home child care), with approximately 70% dedicated to children under 6 years old, for an calculated total of 217,560 in the city. This statistics suggests that less than 20% of children have access to child care. This deficit exists also for the subsidized spaces which count for 22,475 for an estimate of 51,000 underprivileged children.

The personnel interviewed at Children's Services in the City of Toronto claims that, in the municipal level, they work closely with CUPE and the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care. Concerning CUPE, they have a direct relationship through the municipal child care organizations and meet on a regular basis to discuss topics such as "occupational issues, health, and wellness". On the other side, the Toronto Coalition has a long history of collaboration with the City of Toronto.

*"We work closely with the (Toronto) coalition. I think through its inception and actually hired some of their executive directors. We have the Toronto coalition involved in all of our work groups. They're always a member. The restructuring of our network [...], they were on our advisory group. They're a key stakeholder. They're everywhere. [...] Right now we're in the final process of putting together a strategy for middle childhood. And, they were very involved in that as part of a work group. Our network has an aboriginal advisory planning group. They sit on that group. They were on the work group of the redesigning of the network. They also insure that they're attending the childcare advisory committees. And that really is the opportunity where they have a voice in terms of some of the policy decisions that we make."*

## **5.5 Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care**

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (henceforth OCBCC) was founded in 1981 as "a non-partisan public awareness and advocacy group" which works at multiple governmental levels to demand public investment in early childhood education. According to its members, it is a partnership with all provincial intermediary organizations that support child care – which include associations, labour movements etc. – and the local non-profit and public child care centres. The goal in constructing the link between these actors was to combine the political power of intermediary organizations with the legitimacy of the local operators.

*“The reason that that was a really smart way of setting up the coalition is that we are still around thirty years later. If it was just childcare centers, you know we wouldn’t have had the strength or capacity to continue all of these years. And if it was just those groups that want to work towards affordable childcare it wouldn’t have had the credibility and the access to parents. So we really are executive, which is our position making body is 50% provincial and national groups, and 50% childcare centers. And that was an excellent model for us.”*

The main purpose of the OCBCC is promoting “universally accessible, high quality, not-for-profit, regulated child care in the province of Ontario”. The Coalition frequently criticizes the lack of governmental financial support for child care organizations. With the rising cost of services, the Coalition estimates that more parents will quit centres which will eventually lead to more organizations closing. In fact, the issue of childcare centres closures was one of the main preoccupations of OCBCC members at the time of our research.

*“For the last provincial election, we did some of the most intensive work on childcare closures. We actually identified from 2007 to 2011, 400 childcare programs that were closed. That’s 1 childcare program every 4 days in Ontario. Childcare programs are closing all across the province. There’s a huge funding crisis in childcare. The money that the province gives to municipalities has actually not increased since Bob Rae was the premier. So how childcare centers have kept their doors open is by increasing the parents’ fees. Now we have a situation where the childcare is today more expensive than what the average family can afford. I mean with two children is cheaper to have a full time nanny. So because there are actually families which can’t afford childcare, many centers for the first time have reported that they have vacancies. Even though there are lots of children on the neighborhood, they’re on the waiting list, their families can’t afford childcare, and meanwhile there is space that’s empty. Now when you have 30% 40% 50% of your spaces that are vacant, you are not a viable childcare program anymore. So that has led to a lot of childcare closures.”*

One of the most important aspects of the OCBCC work then is ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to the child care survival and development: *“childcare funding is our lead piece and nobody else does it. We’re it and it’s pretty important”*. In fact, in the last year the Coalition members have created campaigns to pressure provincial government on the budget fixed for these organizations with a measure of success. However, the new achieved budget, according to them, still only covers a third of the actual costs of a child care program.

OCBCC portrays the Quebec model of child care as the ideal standard to be adopted at Ontario. As such, the Coalition published many papers to inform the general public about the Quebecois program in order to generate a critical mass inside Ontario to push for a similar policy. For instance, the paper “Myths and Facts about Child care in Quebec” try to deconstruct some



negative myths disseminated about this program, while “Lessons from Quebec” gives a portrait of the benefits of the Quebec program and its focus on non-profit child care.

In this regard, one of the central elements defended by members of the OCBCC is the full rejection of the private solution for child care organizations. The Coalition actors promote and defend the idea that quality of services is essentially in contradiction with the search for profit which motivates the private operators.

*“Now for profit childcare would say: we’re licensed, we’re under the same rules as everybody else but you have to make your money somewhere and the evidence has shown and this is, you know, Gordon Cleveland at University of Toronto Scarborough campus who did a report and it found that for profit child care has more qualified staff that make less money, and they have fewer opportunities for professional development. You have to understand a high quality childcare program is going to spend 75 to 80% of its budget on staff. So if it was a for profit childcare program I could save 25 cents a day off of lunch or I could save 4 \$ an hour off of the wages of an ECE. So that’s where for profit childcare makes its money. But we believe that does have an impact in quality.”*

Therefore, OCBCC constantly divulge studies, such as the above-mentioned Cleveland report, made across Canada showing the significant quality differences between non-profit and for-profit child care organizations. However, Coalition members sustain that this quality advantage depend, first of all, on adequate public funding. Moreover, they also highlight the importance of “government policies that support and encourage the development of a higher level quality in early childhood education and care services”.

The private option for child care is also rejected by OCBCC actors because, according to them, it effectively hinders the full development of a universal public-funded program.

*“I mean there are great reasons why the government ought to fund a childcare program, but we’ve always felt if there were childcare programs that are operating as a business, why would government fund childcare? If I’m going to run a business and make profits then why would I, as government, fund a system so that you could have a profitable business? So we see for profit childcare as fundamentally incompatible with moving towards a real publicly funded system.”*

The values espoused by the OCBCC will guide its action and determine which kind of relationships it is going to develop inside the child care network in Ontario. The Coalition has naturally an adversary position in relation to the Association of Day Nursery Operators Private Sector (ADCO), the Advocacy Group who represents for-profit child care operators. However,

they also have discordances around this issue with other important intermediary organizations, like the Canadian Child Care Federation. According to one OCBCC employee,

*“Our most significant difference with the Childcare Federation is that our vision for childcare is a not for profit childcare system. [...] The Childcare Federation doesn’t have that position and we just think that that’s pretty central for our vision for childcare. [...] So that would be the difference of opinion that we have with the Childcare Federation, but we think it’s the right thing to do.”*

To defend its values, OCBCC personnel will use mainly three different strategies: public information, community organizing, and advocacy. The information task includes using many different means of communication with the larger public to keep them up-to-date on current issues and debates around child care. In fact, part of their work is to translate the complex laws, bills, and policies as well as the general structure of the child care to the general public. The goal is to inform them of how they impact the quality, the affordability, and accessibility of child care in Ontario, and especially what they can do to improve it.

*“We want people to know, if you have a problem finding childcare, paying for childcare, there is actually somebody who’s responsible for that. Primarily it’s provincial government, they have primary jurisdiction over education and every single parent in Ontario who’s having trouble finding childcare or paying for childcare we want them to pick up the phone or send an email to their MPP because that puts it on the provincial agenda. And then of course, federal elections, municipal elections, you know we’re also sending information out on who are the key decision makers because it is otherwise you know people don’t even know who to call. I’m a parent and I can’t afford childcare. We need to be the ones helping childcare centers say well if you are on a waiting list... And many do this as they compile on the waiting list, they automatically... We have a website where people can send an email and at the same time, as they put people on they say: you should contact you know our MPP to say you are on a waiting list so they understand how important childcare is. Most people don’t know even who represents them. 99.9% of the people have no idea who their representatives are. So yes we have a big job in terms of trying to capture this universe. This busy parents and stressed out childcare providers to make sure the issue isn’t lost at Queen’s Park or in Ottawa.”*

One of the main issues, according to OCBCC members, is the specific structure of the child care system in Ontario which is unclear to citizens. In fact, Ontario has, since the Mike Harris government system realignment, the specificity of municipalities running the childcare system with the province controlling the funds allocated: *“so primarily the province is responsible for funding childcare. So the lack of affordable childcare is really their responsibility”*. Consequently, municipalities are considered by Coalition members as advocacy allies since they have a major lobbying role in demanding more resources from the provincial government. As such, it is

important that parents also know where to their action should be directed: *“if you want to apply for childcare subsidy in Toronto, you’ll apply at the city of Toronto. And so if you don’t get a child subsidy, you think it’s the city of Toronto’s fault and it really isn’t. They spend the money that the province gives them”*.

The municipalities in Ontario also built their own intermediary organization to concentrate their power and projects. With the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, they are able to advocate with the provincial government for child care amongst other issues. However, according to OCBCC employees, a major leader in terms of advocacy amongst the municipalities is the City of Toronto. With around 22,000 children in the waiting list, they developed an expertise and resources for advocacy from which the Coalition regularly profits:

*“If you go to their website, you know, they are fantastic in terms of information; they have better information on their website than the province of Ontario. [...] The city of Toronto runs an enormous system of childcare and we often work with them in terms of advocacy. They have obviously access to an enormous amount of statistics and data which we benefit from.*

As we have seen in the above discussion, the informative role of the Coalition is directly linked to its task of community organizer. OCBCC personnel believe that the major impact can be created by mobilizing local stakeholders, such as parents, to influence their political representatives, not only through petitions and e-mails to constituents but also protests like the Anti-Austerity march and rally on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2012 against the 2012 Provincial budget.

*“The focus of the coalition is really to get out organise in local communities who have members all across the province. And instead of us going to Queens Park, I mean I can go there every day [...] we want our members, the childcare centers to get their parents involved to bring members of provincial parliament, federal parliament into their childcare centers and engage in advocacy at the local level.”*

Along with the information and community organizing roles, and as an extension to them, OCBCC also develops an advocacy function. According to its members, the Coalition, alongside the AECEO, is one of the two major child care advocacy organizations in Ontario: *“there are many organisations that do research, networking, and professional development but in terms of advocating for change it’s really those two organisations in Ontario”*. Despite child care being an all-around issue that touches each government sphere, due to the current political climate, the focus of OCBCC advocacy is mostly at the provincial level.

*“We are really an advocacy group and we deal with three levels of government. The federal government... Right now, we’re part of the childcare advocacy association of Canada but under Steven Harper now, quite frankly he has been quite clear that*

*childcare isn't a top priority, there's actually not very much happening at the federal level because there is not very much prospect of making change. So all across Canada, you'll see a lot of activity at the provincial level. And so that's our primary people we're trying to influence is the province."*

As a major advocacy group, the OCBCC members have a voice in many government discussion groups and policy committees. According to Coalition personnel, despite the fact that they raise uncomfortable and challenging issues to public officials, they are a respected voice because they provide a link to people at the grassroots level. One OCBCC explains: *"our strength is our member childcare programs and their relationship with parents. And all of our work is trying to get those parents, childcare staff to meet their MPPs, to communicate with them and put childcare on the agenda at Queen's Park"*.

To accomplish their goals, OCBCC staff follows a reasonably established advocacy agenda which follows the rhythm of provincial politics. Their annual calendar starts with a community-awareness and organizing event in September: the "Childcare Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day". Afterwards, they start their budget campaign to maintain child care issues as a major priority for provincial government and municipalities:

*"In November we start to get pre-budget consultation both federally and provincially. We always in January have some kind of budget campaign for our members with outlining whatever issues. [...] We typically see a federal budget in the beginning of February and we typically see a provincial budget in the beginning of March. Now all of that was much later this year than normal, but, for example, there's a federal consultation there's provincial consultations, we do those, but we also encourage our members to go as committees throughout the province. We provide speaking notes to people, we want them to get out, we do petition campaigns, we do postcards. We try to think of ways to get people involved so that every year childcare is not a forgotten issue, so that every year we're on the agenda. We're never going to be number one, health care and jobs are always going to be number one because they always affect the most number of people, but we never want childcare and childcare funding to not be on the agenda. So we do everything we can to help people make that an issue in their local communities, get articles in local papers. If I'm a member of the provincial parliament, I get clippings on my desk, from all of my local paper, I see the number of people who emailed my office, I have weekly meetings with constituents. So those are all the things that we try really to get people really involved in so that childcare is an issue."*

All this work has been performed by the OCBCC, over the last years, with a much smaller organization due to major funding cuts particularly due to Harper new federal policies. The Coalition now works with only two people in their permanent staff. Their structure also

comprises the executive, the main council, and over 800 members form the Ontario child care network.

When analyzing their work inside the Ontario child care network and their relationship with other groups, OCBCC employees believe that there is a great heterogeneity amongst the intermediary organizations. According to them:

*“We’re all different organizations. We work together when we’re on the same page. We do our own thing when we’re not on the same page. [...] It’s a pretty small world, we’re not unknown to each other, and we do work together. [...] We are different constituents. We don’t all belong in one meshed organization. We all believe there’s under funding and we need more funding so we all work to solve that, we work together as much as we can but we also have different mandates”*

One of the examples of these differences is the work done by the other advocacy actor in Ontario, the AECEO. Historically, the two organizations have a long term partnership and mutually influence each other’s actions<sup>24</sup>. However, they differ in terms of their own specific priorities. According to one OCBCC employee: *“their primary mandate is to advocate on the status of ECEs and to do professional development and our primary organization is to involve childcare centers and build support for childcare and childcare funding”*. Their fundamental disagreement is clearly demonstrated when the College of ECEs is concerned.

*“The interesting thing is that of course we have a college for ECEs now. This actually the AECEO have fought for this for many years. At the Coalition our position was that the college was not necessarily a bad thing, but in absence of a well-funded system, what you’re really doing is you’re saying individual programs in childcare belong to one person and so if you want to make people individually responsible for the quality of the childcare programs then you need to fund the system. So we said it went in the wrong order at the Coalition. [...] (The Colleges) are all with government representatives and their responsibilities are not to the sector, it’s to the public. Their main responsibility is to protect the public.”*

Despite these major differences, our interviewees in the Coalition, believes that each organization has a contribution to the defense of the child care services quality and investment by the government. According to them, their combined voices can better influence public officials: *“the government needs to hear from a lot different places to take it seriously and put money up.”* This group effort and pressure seems particularly important during the current debate around changes on the Day Nursery’s Act to create a new legislation.

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<sup>24</sup> The AECEO, for instance, have representatives in the Coalition executive.

*"We have been told that this year that they will be doing a huge rewrite of the Day Nursery's Act. [...] Now in terms of the major players who will participate in this process. We will, the AECEO will, and municipalities will. [...]. Lots of people will put in, write papers about the kind that they respond to the government. In terms of the main groups, it would be us, the AECEO and Ontario municipalities. The staff who works in Children's Services are part of an association. It's called the OMSSA Ontario Municipal Social Service Association and the political leadership if I was a councillor or a mayor, they are part of the AOM the Association of Ontario Municipalities. And so that's staff part of the municipalities and the political leadership of the municipalities. If they're rewriting the Act, a lot of people will be interested. But we will be the most influential parties, because we're already planning through a consultation, our own consultation this Fall and public meetings on legislative changes. We imagine the Ministry will do that as well. But we'll do our own."*

Finally, the OCBCC have an established partnership with CUPE. According to the Coalition employees, unions are not necessarily interested in child care for organising its small number of workers. Instead, they come more from a parent perspective *"because their own members have to go back to work and there is no available childcare"*. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Coalition and CUPE is one of mutual interest involving, among other benefits, the exchange of resources, information and network.

*"We do a lot with CUPE because they are the largest union representing ECEs. But you know we work on it full time, they have one person and this is like a third of her job. So they rely on us a lot to stay on top of child care, thinking about what's next, and developing campaigns. And then all of our partners, the teachers, CUPE, the CAW, the Ontario federation of labour, we rely on them not just to fund some of our campaigns, but to get our campaign material and get them out to their members. You know there are incredible networks in unions, we go to a lot of union conferences, we run a lot of individual campaigns because we want to get people involved and we want these issues to be top of priority for government, for unions, for municipal politicians, people everywhere."*

With the new kindergarten program, OCBCC employees believe that unions' power will increase with the additional number of ECEs in the public system. For the coalition, *"childcare workers are underpaid and undervalued and we would benefit from more unionization to make wages higher"*. However, their influence, particularly CUPE's, is still linked to the public sector and is very limited inside community based child care.

*"CUPE represents a lot of ECEs because many municipalities have run their own municipal childcare program. For example, the city of Toronto, directly operates 51 [52 in 2012] childcare centers, those workers are part of the city of Toronto CUPE"*

*bargaining unit. Now when you actually get down to community based childcare, there's a handful that are unionized and you get that services employees have one in Belleville. There are literally a handful of unions that represents its matter. So it's very small. All across the province, the unionization of childcare in Ontario I would put definitely less than 10%.*

## **5.6 Canadian Union of Public Employees**

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) is the largest public sector union in Canada. It represents over 600 000 workers that work in libraries, in municipal governments, in child care, in group homes, in the air lines, among others. CUPE was created in 1963 from the union of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and the National Union of Public Service Employees (NUPSE). CUPE is run by a National Executive Board, which meets four times a year and is elected by members in biennial national conventions. However, CUPE also has local unions supported by the national organization in terms of resources, information, and training. CUPE currently have more than 2,200 local unions across Canada.

CUPE's involvement in child care advocacy, according its documents, originates from its interest in women's equality, poverty reduction, work/family balance, and children's health. Hence, CUPE founded in the mid-70s its childcare section which represents approximately 8 000 childcare workers. At that time, union members, through a resolution, called on the national union, to setup a national childcare working group. This group brings childcare members from across Canada together in meetings twice a year. These meetings are an occasion for exchange about problems and events on individual provinces and communities in order to build a global picture of the state of childcare nationally. This variety orients the formation of the national committee.

*"Every second year CUPE national puts out a call for members to put forward their names to sit on the committee and then members from different provinces across the country put their names forward. The CUPE national office reviews the names and then appoints. And they appoint so that they can make sure they have good representation geographically as well as a good representation of the different kinds of childcare providers. For example, we have childcares members who work in public municipal centres like in Toronto municipal centres; we have members who work in school boards as childcare ECEs and also as aids. So we have municipal childcare workers, school boards workers and we also have community-based workers. So when CUPE national is putting together its National Childcare Committee, it takes into consideration representation from each of the provinces and representation from the various kinds of childcare delivery."*

The creation of the National Child Care Working Group was motivated, according to members, by their desire *“to have a stronger voice so that we could put forward policies for our union to act on behalf of our interest”*. This centralization allowed them to create a common policy position to present to governments and also run more effective campaigns nationwide. The group also encouraged the construction of partnerships with many other national network child care actors:

*“National Childcare Working Group, we work with a lot of other national organizations on childcare policies. So we’ll work with the Canadian Labour Congress, we’ll work with the Childcare Advocacy Association of Canada, we will work with the Childcare Federation, we have 2 seats at the human sector childcare council, the federal sector table. We have 2 seats on that and it deals with workforce issues across, ECE workforce issues across the country. So we try to influence policy by making sure we are at important tables, we try to influence policy by working with other national organizations to develop policy positions. CUPE does a lot of support for advocacy organisations around childcare; we’re a main supporter of the Childcare Advocacy Association of Canada. So much of their policy work like the childcare as a human right has been supported by CUPE; we’ve engaged our members in being part of that. Right now there’s an open letter that is going around, to the Childcare Advocacy Association of Canada, on childcare as a human right. So we engage our members also in other organisation’s campaigns so that we’re always building the political pressure on our policy positions.”*

The national committee has a provincial wing, the Ontario Division Child Care Committee, which was created to *“build political strength through grassroots mobilising”*. According to CUPE members, they try to build presence inside provinces and communities to create local political pressure to advance policies. In that sense, they also work with many local organizations such as the OCBCC: *“We work very closely and have been a key partner of the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare for the last 30 years”*. In fact, a member of CUPE committee is a former president of the Coalition.

In Ontario, however, CUPE hasn’t developed the same close partnership relationship with the other main provincial child care advocacy organization, the AECEO. According to CUPE members, they maintained distance from the Association because they didn’t defended the same vision of the child care system that CUPE and the OCBCC shared.

*“This is a big, a big issue. CUPE advocates for publicly funded and publicly delivered childcare. That’s our ultimate goal, just like education. We want people to see childcare as a right, the same that people see public education as a right. The AECEO for many years remained silent on the issue of public versus private childcare and for that reason as well we did not work with them [...]. We never did support that so that we didn’t work with them for many, many years because our policy positions were very different.”*



*And the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare has always had a strong policy position on public and not for profit, so CUPE works with them."*

In fact, CUPE members advocated recently against the "invasion" of low-quality private child care multinational organizations (particularly ABC) which are replacing the original small privately-owned organizations. CUPE claims that these groups do not offer high quality services with decent wages and work conditions that are more typical of public child care. In that sense, CUPE also consider non-profit child care as "private" and consider that community-based organizations led by parents and voluntary groups show the same inconsistency in terms of quality compared to the public-funded and delivered option. According to CUPE, public child cares provide families a better access to integrated quality education which is accountable to communities.

This difference in perspective also affected how the union viewed AECEO actions in relation to the child care system. The case in point is the creation of the College of ECEs. Here, as the Coalition, CUPE was dubious in their support of the promotion of a professional program before early childhood educators and child care centres were adequately supported by the government. However, CUPE members eventually supported the initiative nonetheless with some restrictions.

*"We didn't work with them (AECEO) because they were pushing a professional agenda that we supported on the one hand, but we felt that we wanted a commitment from the provincial government that it would fully fund a childcare system before it would start to put professional expectations on a system that was fragmented, on a workforce that was underpaid and undervalued. So we wanted to put pressure so that if you want the professional standard you've got to fund the system. So we were at quite a different place then the AECEO in terms of policy objectives. We wanted a fully funded integrated comprehensive childcare system before we started advocating for a professional college. [...] We felt it was a form of privatisation, a way to make individual early childhood educators accountable in a system that was grossly underfunded. We felt the onus was on the individual rather than governments building systems that ensure that the professional that work in them have the tools and resources they need to deliver a quality program. So fundamentally we did not accept the college of ECE. And you know over the years... initially we were very resistant to that, saying to the government you need to fund the system, you need to build the system, you need to provide adequate wages and benefits so that you could attract a well trained workforce and until you do that you can't put those expectations on the workforce when it's so grossly underfunded."*

The recent creation of the College of Early Childhood Educators has also other practical impacts for CUPE. Fundamentally, union members are now subject to eventual disciplinary processes through this new regulatory body in charge of protecting the public interest. CUPE however has

yet to establish the size and scope of a formal structure, which exist for other professional bodies, to support its ECE members during these procedures.

*“This is very, very new right. The teachers’ unions have funds to help support their members defend themselves in front of their professional colleges. CUPE at this point does not have a fund [for ECEs] but I can tell you that when a member has had a complaint filed with the college, we at the locals that represent these members support them too. We get legal advice from our national union and we ensure that a process that respects labour laws is undertaken. At this point because the college is quite new I’ve not been hearing where the unions are being dragged in front of the ECE College to defend members. So this is going to become a conversation about CUPE childcare members about what we expect of our unions in terms of defending us in front of the college. But it is a conversation that we’ve not yet had. So have developed a common understanding of what it that we need as CUPE childcare members in order to put forward a resolution at a convention to say this what we want our national union to do to represent us. So we haven’t gotten there yet, but I think it’s just a matter of time.”*

These differences amongst intermediary organizations in the Ontario child care network create, according to CUPE members, a complex and difficult debate when it comes to achieving consensus on which policies are best for the sector. In fact, the difficulty also comes from the variety of child care centres which are also impacted differently by provincial and local policies. One of CUPE members explained how this process unfolded in the case of full-day learning program.

*“CUPE Ontario had a position on the Pascal full day kindergartens. Different policies get done in different ways, but in this one in particular it was a very difficult discussion because it would impact on our members differently whether our members worked in a municipal centre in a school board, in the schools, or in the community. So we had a full day session that brought key members from all of those different sectors together from all across Ontario. We had a discussion and reached a consensus on a policy position. We took that policy position and over to the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare and discussed it with them always. And then the Ontario coalition they do similar internal reaching consensus because they too have a diverse group of stakeholders. They have the executive directors of community based childcare; they have different unions in Ontario. In this particular situation, we had the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, the Ontario Secondary Teachers Federation and CUPE who had very different positions from other members of the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare. So in developing policies for organisations is in part an internal process, particularly among coalitions right? Because ETFO had its policy position, OSTF had its policy position, CUPE had its policy position, the Association of Early Childhood Educators had their*

*position and they all sit at the Coalition table. So then the Coalition has to find policy position that all of its members can live with."*

Ontario is recognized by CUPE as the only province with a "substantial public child care for children aged zero to six". In 2007, most Ontario municipalities operated child care centres and/or had an agency regulating family child care. Despite this acknowledgment, the union have representatives working regularly with MPPs, Ministers, and other members of government to influence on the construction of policy. Most recently, the NDP has been a major partner in their fight:

*"When we're developing policy, CUPE works a lot with NDP. That's where our alliance is. That's where our natural kind of policy positions come down as with the NDP. [...] So we'll work with opposition, and mostly the NDP, on talking about what it is that we need so that we can get the NDP close to our policy position."*

CUPE holds many actions, campaigns, surveys, and meetings in each Canadian province to aid union members and support local organizations in pressuring local governments to support the construction of child care programs. One of the instruments in that campaign is, of course, to introduce child care clauses into collective agreements and the Union inform and guide its members in how to achieve that goal. At the national level, for instance, CUPE launched in 2009 a national tour "A Great Place to Grow" to defend public child care as a solution alongside Martha Friendly and Susan Prentice, respectively from the University Toronto and Manitoba. In 2011, CUPE created an e-mail campaign to pressure Ontario government to increase provincial funding for child care.

CUPE is involved in offering different professional development courses to local members. This training however is not linked to early childhood education in itself but mostly to "build professional competencies" on effective communication and workplace conflict resolution, etc. Nonetheless, CUPE also has a role in demanding improvement opportunities for members inside their organizations.

*"We also negotiate with the employers and this is done individually at the bargaining table. So that's the big service for our members, is that we bargain for them. We bargain professional development pay, professional development days; we bargain with their employers, we make their employers pay for them. We bargain for members to be able to attend conferences and seminars. So that's what we bargain for them. We don't deliver it but we bargain it so that they can have it available for them."*

CUPE offers support in terms of information. The objective is to help them mobilize local members and influence the construction of policy at all three governmental levels. Between these

activities, one of the most important, according to CUPE members, is the training provided by the union to educate the workers in political matters:

*“CUPE offers courses in political activism, in media communications, in setting up lobbies, writing briefs, so we encourage our members at every turn to be making presentations to local government, submitting briefs to the provincial government and as well to making submissions to the federal government. And we run courses on how to do that, we develop position papers, briefing papers to help them to do that.”*

CUPE also develops many campaigns to pressure MPs and the federal government to pass laws and allocate funds to build a child care system. The union supported the previous federal government when it began to set up a national child care program. However, with the Harper government most of these actions were toned down due to the current government’s declared opposition to any kind of public funding. In fact, since 2007, the conservative government federal budget cancelled most of the resources agreed with the provinces originally linked to the national child care program, transferring most of it to the new child tax benefit. The subsequent federal budgets only confirmed this option.

During this period CUPE published research findings and reports, such as “Early Learning and Child Care – It’s Time”, that points out the negative impact of the conservative government on child care. Lately, CUPE has joined the national campaign “Let’s rethink child care” to bring out this issue in the next federal election in 2015. Amongst the issues discussed, CUPE members state that, according to studies, the most important factor in assuring child care quality is a staff with adequate wages and benefits. The social and economic impacts of child care are also highlighted by them as well as the fact that, according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, Canada and its provinces lag behind in terms early learning and care.

In the City of Toronto, it is CUPE Local 79 who represents around 52 municipally operated child care programs. City of Toronto employees created the Local 79 in 1941 and ever since it has been the largest local union in Canada. Currently, it represents around 20,000 members. Besides Child Care, Local 79 has members for other professions such as nurses, social service employees, and ambulance dispatchers, amongst others. Local 79 is run by the Executive Committee which meets twice a month and is elected every three years by its members. Local 79 also has an Executive Board formed by members of the Executive, nine Unit Officers (responsible for grievances and disputes in different bargaining units), and fourteen members-at-large. The Board meets once a month to generate recommendations to the General Membership meetings.

While acknowledging Toronto benchmark services in child care, Local 79 claims the current administration attempts to cut to these services and outsource them. As such, Local 79, alongside the Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, follows and criticizes the current administration movements, for instance, in hiring a consulting firm to look at options such as outsource, transfer

facilities, or reduce funding of Child Care. In 2012, Local 79 followed the City of Toronto Service Reviews focused on Child Care amongst other services to prevent further cuts in preparation to the to the City's 2013 budget process. At the end, the Toronto City Council reversed the cuts of 2,000 subsidized child care places by Mayor Rob Ford and added \$3.8 million to fund fee subsidies for 264 new child care spots.

Like we mentioned during our analysis description of Children's Services, there is some collaboration between CUPE and the City of Toronto. For instance, in 2010, Local 79 representatives met and held joint information sessions with the Children's Services Division. The goal at that time was to discuss the provincial government's implementation of full-day learning and its impact on child care organizations and workers. This interaction between local government officials and CUPE representatives is an important part of the union work.

*"So we regularly make contact with city counsellors and with the bureaucrats. I know the bureaucrats on personal level because we do a lot of behind the scenes work with them. Informing them in what's needed around childcare and trying to work in the back rooms to get them to put forward good reports and recommendations to the elected council".*

When it comes to collective bargaining, CUPE members recognize the difficulty related to the multiple forms of child care operators throughout Ontario and the city of Toronto. Nowadays they have to deal with each different sector. For example, each local has to negotiate directly with their city governments on behalf of the municipal child care workers. Other members are school-board employees therefore CUPE has a different collective bargaining for these groups. As one member explains: *"We would love to have a central provincial bargaining table, but, at this point we are bargaining individually with our different employers."*

The process of negotiation however is quite different when CUPE deals with community-based child care centers. CUPE members are aware of the specificities of these organizations which limit the bargaining process and demand a different approach by the union. In this instance, CUPE performs a different and political role which involves engaging parents and workers in fighting for the resources which will benefit the child care center and its members.

*"It's a much more challenging way to bargain because who we are bargaining against is the parents who use the centers. In the case of the community-based childcare centers they have board of directors often times made up of the parents who use that center. [...] So these boards don't have a lot of political quote, they deal with the money that government gives them. So we bargain with them. So what the local does is that we recognise that the parents who make up our boards and our employers who we bargain with don't have a lot of say in the money that they get. So we always enter into what we call a letter of understanding that commits the employer and the union to*

*conduct the joint campaign to go to the municipal government and the provincial government for the money to meet the bargaining demands. So that is how we try to be collective, we always are very aware that every wage increase that we negotiate it impacts on the parent fees. So we try and litigate that."*

Finally, CUPE is also responsible for establishing the existing pension plan available for childcare workers. The Multi-Sector Pension Plan (MSPP) is a multi-employer pension Target Benefit Plan which covers most small child care centers, mostly the community-based organizations, which are unable to afford a registered pension plan. Municipal employees have access to Ontario Municipal Employees' Retirement System (OMERS). According to CUPE representatives, it was the mobilization of its ECE members who made this change possible.

*"This was done through the members realising that we didn't have enough to retire on, that many people working in childcare do not have a pension. And their wages are low so their CPP [Canada Pension Plan] are going to be low. We have negotiated registered retirement savings plans and then probably about 20 years ago. And this came again from the childcare members coming together at the National Childcare working group from across the country, it came from members coming together in Ontario and the other provinces to say: "we want CUPE to do something to help us to retire and live in dignity". So we were effective in bringing forward a resolution to convention probably 15-16 years ago calling on CUPE to work with another union to set up a pension plan."*

## 5.7 Universities and colleges

The Ontario educational institutions have an essential influence on the province's child care network. First and foremost, they are responsible for training the future early childhood workers that enter the market every year. As such, they work together with child care centres since this is where their students do their placement as a necessary requirement to be granted a diploma. In that work, the universities and colleges follow the market tendencies identified by child care intermediary organizations and established by government requirements but maintain autonomy in terms of the methods proposed in the classroom.

*"We look at trends, we look at the Childcare Human Resources Sector Council all of their data that they've collected. They've surveyed employers that say that, you know, graduates don't have enough knowledge in working with students... with children with special needs for example. [...] The particular departments in the college or the university create a curriculum, but they are aware of the Ministry Training, College and Universities requirements, but our programs are not accredited. We don't have investigators coming to see what the content of our program is. [...] We think it's very*

*important in our degree, BA degree program that our students are introduced to a number of different curriculum approaches, to different theoretical perspectives on the development of children. So we introduce a whole range of perspectives then we ask our students to take all those perspectives and ask themselves which one they would use. And of course they do placements as well and that shapes their understanding of curriculum and child development and so on."*

Also, universities and colleges as well as research centres provide knowledge to the centres and the Ontario child care network at large through specific studies, consultation, and professional development. There are in fact many events cohosted by many of Ontario child care intermediary organizations and different scholars and educational institutions where they discuss new demands and future projects. Currently, the main issue is the leadership project created and constructed with other intermediary organizations such as the AECEO.

*"We're involved in professional development. We're working on a series of professional learning modules that will enable the leaders in municipalities, in the ministry and so on to take a leadership role in the integration of early childhood services in Ontario."*

These institutions also provide important work on policies that will feed child care advocacy throughout the province. For instance, every time that the provincial government or municipalities propose a new change in legislation or an original program in early childhood education, they organise exchanges and discussion among actors: *"when issues have come up in around changes in early childhood education and withheld symposiums, brought people together to talk about some issues, try to move policy forward"*. The recent "Modernizing Child Care" proposal by the provincial government is just one more example of this dynamic.

*"Right now there is the modernising childcare discussion paper, which we're responding to. I have worked with the Atkinson center [...] on discussion papers about children with special needs. We have been involved in various expert panels over the years. [...] We issue papers and we send suggestion, we try to do everything we can."*

Historically, the influence of educational institutions on the development of policies for the Ontario child care system can be traced back to the work of Frazer Mustard and Margaret McCain which laid the foundations for the first provincial attempt to develop a framework for early childhood education settings: the Best Start Plan. Best Start was introduced in 2004 to create *"a comprehensive and continuous service system for children from the prenatal period through elementary school"*. It involved a panel composed by prominent early childhood scholars from different colleges and universities in Ontario (University of Toronto, Ryerson University, George Brown College, Ottawa University etc.), which produced the document "Early Learning for Every Child Today" published in 2006.

The impact of educational institutions on Ontario child care efforts was reinforced in 2007, when Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Prof. Pascal from the Atkinson Centre of the University of Toronto as his special advisor on Early Learning. His major report was released on June 2009, *“With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario”* about the best way to implement full-day kindergarten, bringing together different child, family and education services. Pascal recommended a budget of 1 billion annually to cover its costs and a further 1.7 billion to build and upgrade classrooms. The report was complemented by a summary of evidence with the research that supported the recommendations and *“Every Child, Every Opportunity”*, a new curriculum published to replace the former kindergarten education program with an emphasis on learning-based play.

All that time, the academy didn’t work behind close walls. On the contrary, all these studies and reports were created in a constant exchange with the child care intermediary organizations. In fact, in his report, prof. Pascal recognized that all of these documents were made with the collaboration with many actors of the Ontario Child Care Network. Also, when the recommendations were criticized as impractical and expensive, many organizations from the child care network supported the document by creating their own studies sustaining a positive cost/benefit analysis of the planned program. Amongst others, the Atkinson Foundation and The Centre for Spatial Economics published in 2010 a study called *“Early Learning and care Impact Analysis”* where they analyze the benefits and costs of the Pascal proposal and suggest a gain of 2\$ for each spend by government.

In general, according to one university professor, there is recognition that educational institutions contributed greatly to improve the general state of the child care system in Ontario. This pioneering work impacted particularly the quality of the service provided by early childhood workers in child care centres as well as the professionalization of ECEs in the province.

*“There is an ECE program, I believe, in every college in Ontario. [...] I think that the postsecondary institutions were ahead of policy and ahead of many things in early childhood education. It wasn’t until our college of early childhood educators, which is a regulatory body for ECEs in Ontario, that a diploma was required in order to be registered and identified as an early childhood educator. So, we’ve had training program that I believe there’s something like 20 000 individuals working in ECE programs who were not trained and the legislation in Ontario allowed that. And we felt that all childhood educators, anybody working with children should be, should have a postsecondary education”*



## **5.8 Others actors**

### ***5.8.1 Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care***

The Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care (TCBCC), as its provincial parent organization, defends a universal non-profit based public-funded child care system for the City of Toronto. They possess a membership based on the local stakeholders. They also have an advocacy and informational role, concentrating, however, on city-level issues like the accessibility, quality, and conditions of municipal child care centers. Therefore, TCBCC has a more limited impact in terms of budget advocacy since most resources come from the provincial level. Nevertheless they do lobby for policy at the local sphere, create informational campaigns for the public and the media, and work to build an exchange network among its members. They have been recognized as an important partner of the City of Toronto's Children's Services.

### ***5.8.2 Toronto Child and Family Network***

The Toronto Child and Family Network was created in 2012 as "a partnership between a cross-section of agencies and organizations who share the same goal of promoting positive outcomes for new and expectant parents, children and families". It was built to continue the work developed by the Best Start Network, which officially ended in 2011, and focus on community participation; coordination between provincial, municipal, and community in terms of planning, policy, programs; and service integration in multiple areas (health, family support, children with special needs, and early learning). In the early learning sector, there is a committee "responsible for acting as a platform for the planning, implementation and integration of nurturing, high quality services".

The committee meets five times a year with members from various agencies of the city of Toronto (Toronto Children's Services, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Public Library, etc.), the four District Child Care Advisories, a representative from the Ministry of Education as well as Children and Youth Services, and many different intermediary organizations (Quality Early Learning Network, Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care, etc.) and a representative from Toronto colleges and universities. Their action guiding principles are: simple and equitable family access to services and information; transition planning between sectors; partnership fostering; service integration; research and data collection; and service and capacity evaluation.

### ***5.8.3 Canadian Child Care Federation***

The Canadian Child Care Federation (henceforth CCCF) was created in 1987 from a meeting with representatives of provincial and territorial child care associations. CCCF is the largest national child care organization with 21 affiliate organizations and over 11,000 members (data from 2007). Its main focus is on research and knowledge dissemination. For that goal, CCCF publishes the weekly newsletter “Interaction”, maintains a resource library for its members (digital access), and divulges its studies through published reports. the CCCF also seeks to establish and promote professional networks to encourage the exchange of information amongst its members. For that purpose, the federation creates and coordinates many events like conferences and meetings where members could participate and discuss specific topics of professional interest.

Amid its main research interests, the Federation has carried research on topics such as wages and working conditions in child care organizations, quality in child care, training and professional development, aboriginal child care etc. Some of its most important products are the “Occupational standards for child care practitioners” published in 2004, and the “National Statement on Quality Early Learning and Child Care” published in 2007. For practitioners, CCCF provides a series of toolkits and information packages to its members on many topics around childhood education such as: numeracy, literacy, children and nature, children’s rights etc. The Federation also have many resources available to parents and families to help them choose their child care provider and “manage the early years”.

CCCF structure is first composed of a seven-member board of directors elected by its members who is responsible for major strategic decisions and internal policies. The Federation also possesses a Member Council table including representatives of each organization associated form all over Canada who provides feedback and information to all board decisions. All main provincial child care associations<sup>25</sup> are affiliated to the CCCF and have a voice in this council.

### ***5.8.4 Child Care Human Resources Sector Council***

The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council (henceforth CCHRSC) is a national non-profit organization founded by the federal government in order mainly to produce research and disseminate information for ECEs, employers, policy makers, and academics, about the human resources issues in early childhood education. It was officially incorporated in 2003 from the original Child Care Human Resources Round Table. It is part of the sector council initiative by the federal government which unites people such as professionals, business leaders, and scholars to discuss human resource issues. CCHRSC most recent researches cover the analysis of the ECE labour market (its characteristics, socioeconomic impact, shortage issues, and recruiting and

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<sup>25</sup> In Quebec the membership is by the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Québec.

retention challenges), their work conditions (wages and benefits), and daily challenges; the governance of child care centers (particularly challenges and strategies in human resources); and quality in the child care system.

The Council also creates tools for the professional development of child care workers in Canada. One of these tools is the description of the occupational standards for ECEs and child care administrators which can be used to determine their roles and responsibilities, evaluate performance, and determine professional development needs. Other tool is the guide to credentialing which could help professionals understand how this process takes place in each of the Canadian provinces. The CCHRSC also provides other instruments such as a HR Toolkit for employers created especially for the ECE context.

The council also serve as a platform for networking amongst ECEs. Actors in the network can sign up for participating in research and enroll in their professional network site. Scholars have a dedicated network, created with the collaboration of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, the ECE Affinity Group, with specific annual forums and publications to discuss and share ideas on early childhood education. Finally, CCHRSC also promotes the recognition of the child care workers' importance amid the general public.

The Council is administered by an eighteen-member voluntary board of directors with members coming from child care organizations, child care and labour associations, colleges and universities, government, and other stakeholders. CCHRSC main partners are the Canadian Child Care Federation, Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, Canadian Union of Public Employees, and The National Union of Public and General Employees. CCHRSC is also a member of the alliance of Sector Councils which is a coordinating body for all federal councils.

Some actors of the child care network, while acknowledging the importance of the CCHRSC researches to the field, voiced some criticisms of its action. The main element of disapproval concerns the lack of more effective activism by the Council before the federal government to promote and defend its propositions. Up until now, CCHRSC work hasn't managed to influence policy change as it should. According to one child care actor,

*"Where people grew frustrated with the sector council was that they didn't do any advocacy at all. Now that wasn't their role, that's fine, but they'd come out with these reports and data that would show to government: look we don't have enough trained early childhood educators, we don't have the right training for them. Time and again their reports would demonstrate just how under resourced and so on the whole childcare was in the whole country, but that's where it ended and they've never had any influence, even before Harper, they've never had any influence. It's like yeah great you've done these wonderful reports, but... So it would be different if once something came out and there was this mass communication: look what we've found out. You*

*know, you got the public involved and everybody went after the government and said: look at the report says it right here, you know, you're underfunding, children are not getting the services at a level, between all children and families, you know, you're just not doing the right thing by childcare. But they never did. So I think when the sector found out that the sector council was shutting down they didn't rush to say oh no, we have to save it."*

As mentioned in the above citation, the CCHRSC now faces a major challenge to guarantee its survival in the future. In 2012, the Canadian government announced that the HRSDC Sector Council Program, the major funding source for all councils, will be terminated in March 2013. Also, the Harper administration determined that public funds for research will now be given to individual projects instead of assigning them directly to each council. Many different sector councils, as a consequence, are closing down while some have survived through the support of their sector. The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council closed its doors as we were finishing this research.

## **6. THE MULTIPLE ACTIONS OF INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ONTARIO DAY CARE SECTOR**

With the above description of the actors inside Ontario day care sector, we were able to paint a more comprehensive view of their dynamic (Figure 6). More specifically, we focused on their role, their interaction, and their impact on child care organizations. In this portrait, we identified different kinds of actions performed by these institutions which contributed to construct the current state of affairs in the provincial day care (Figure 4). These actions are not neatly separated in reality instead they normally serve multiple and different purposes with some organizations performing more than one, however for the benefit of our analysis we divided them in five different groups: political, professional, cognitive, regulative, and administrative.

First, there are political actions which normally include child care advocacy before public officials, promotion of a preferred child care model before multiple stakeholders, and creation of public awareness for the current (and problematic) state of early learning in the province. These actions were normally accomplished by the OCBCC and CUPE which promoted extensively the non-private child care model and mobilized in order to create pressure for more public funding. The TCBCC and the Toronto Child and Family Network also performed these political actions. Other organizations, such as AECEO and CECE, were not as active in this area, according to their representatives, mainly because of the limits of their own legal status.

These two intermediary organizations were really major players in terms of professional actions. These represent any kind of initiative that served to establish rules, and standards for the child care sector. Both CECE and AECEO were essential to this process, with the former establishing and controlling the standards of practice while the latter disseminate it through training, professional networking, and other academic activities. In this effort, these intermediary organizations were sometimes helped by educational institutions which, for instance, provided support for training.

The professional and political actions were constantly supported by cognitive ones. Here actors such as academic centers, sectorial research institutions were engaged in creating knowledge to legitimate and guide the child care professional and organizations. Atkinson Center, OISE, George Brown along with CCCF and CCHRSC were fundamental in constructing and disseminating knowledge about the professions which not only supported the ECE professionalization, but also gave legitimacy for their advocacy demands before the provincial and municipal governments.

Finally, the public organizations were in charge of two different types of actions: regulative and administrative. The Ontario Ministry of Education, besides providing the funding necessary to the survival of the child care sector, was also in charge of the regulative actions of establishing the general policies and programs which will affect their work, like the recent FDK program.

While, possessing some regulatory power, the municipal government, through its Children Services Agency was mostly in charge of administrative actions including planning and managing the system and directly running municipal daycares. Their regulatory action was most evident in the quality control exercised over licensed day care operators.

**Figure 4 - Main actors in the Ontario child care network: Federal, provincial, and municipal level**





## 7. CO-CONSTRUCTION OF POLICY IN THE ONTARIO AND TORONTO CHILD CARE SECTOR

After establishing the scope of the Ontario child care network and its intermediary organizations, we will now turn to their role as co-constructors of public policy. During our research, in analyzing their influence on the creation and modification of child care laws and programs, it was clear that, most of the time, associations, unions, universities, and other organizations have an important voice on government decisions. This voice was stifled in some political moments like during Premier Mike Harris period on the Ontario government. However, in general, Ontario and Toronto officials open the debate with the child care stakeholders even if some actors question the real impact of their suggestions and comments on public policy.

In this section, we explore some of these moments where the child care intermediary organizations were able to co-construct policy as a partner of the provincial or municipal governments. There are four specific areas where we identified their impact: enactment of laws, specification of program guidelines, establishment of budgets, and creation of general policies. In order to illustrate the important influence accomplished by these organizations, we analyze below four poignant examples: the creation of the College of Early Childhood Educators, the elaboration of the full-day kindergarten program, the 2012 budget negotiation, and the discussion over Ontario Ministry of Education's working paper "Modernizing child care". Each of these cases covers one of more of these areas where the impact of intermediary organizations is essential to Ontario's and City of Toronto's child care system.

### 7.1 The Creation of the College of ECEs

The College of Early Child Educators, ECEs professional regulatory body, is one of the main examples of the influence of Ontario's child care intermediary organizations on the enactment of legislation in the province. It was created due to almost three decades of lobbying by many different actors of the Ontario Child Care Network. This group included the Association of Early Childhood Educators (AECEO), the *Association des éducatrices et des éducateurs francophones des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario* (AFESEO), Canadian Mothercraft Society, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Home Child Care Association of Ontario, and ECE Coordinators for Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

*"I think certainly the Association for Early Childhood Educators was a critical and important organization as the organization that was responsible for the professions. I think that the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare was also important. There were people from Ryerson University, people from other community colleges. There were*

*people like Martha Friendly. Just a whole group of people in those professions that were really working on the recognition of the profession."*

There is however the recognition that behind all these actors, the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario was a major leader in pushing for the new legislation. In fact, the first efforts made for the creation of the College of ECEs date back from the middle of the past century.

*"It was the Association was first started by a group of women who felt that there needed to be accountability around the childcare services and this is back in the 1950s [...] they realised that until the profession was regulated and recognised by government as profession that there would be no accountability around who was hired, how well they're training and the standards of training"*

According to members of the College, the success behind its existence was based initially on persistent advocacy by many child care networks actors beside the provincial government: *"It took over thirty years, countless researches, there was so much research done, there was meetings with elected officials"*. However, despite the vital work performed by these individuals and organizations, they believe that what prompted the creation of the College was the political opportunity:

*"It was a change in government that finally got a new party coming in to start dialogue with the early leaning sector and they showed an interest in recognising ECEs as professionals and so after that it quickly fell into place. I don't want to take away from all of the advocacy that the members of the association did, they worked tirelessly, however, there was a gap in the window and we quickly took advantage of that and that's how it came to be."*

At that time, the child care intermediary organizations were involved in the Working Committee for Legislative Recognition of Early Childhood Educators. This committee brought forth recommendations to push the Ontario government to legislate on the profession's self-regulation. The creation of the College was considered a major step to the professional recognition of Early Childhood Educators and to the appreciation of the child care network as a whole.

*"The College was created for a number of purposes. I think the recognition that early childhood education is a profession, that it has a unique skill set and that it needs to be recognised and also to be recognised means to be regulated and I think for all of those reasons a number of advocates worked over a long time to get the college established. The college is established actually under an Act of legislation of the province. So it is a political body and I think, and I don't have names of individuals, but I know that lots of advocates; early childhood educators, academics... did a lot of work in raising the*

*profession, raising the standards in the profession and then worked with politicians to make the college happen by enacting a piece of legislation.”*

Due to the persistent action of these organizations, the Ontario provincial government enacted the Early Childhood Educators Act. This piece of legislation, besides constituting the College and defining its main roles and responsibilities, also established some important safeguards for the profession. First, included a definition of the early childhood profession practice and what it entails<sup>26</sup>. Next, the act indicated the requirement of all ECEs to be a member of the College to practice their craft. And, finally, it protected the title of early childhood education and authorized its use solely by College members.

The existence of the College of ECEs is then a symbol of the power of Ontario intermediary organizations to influence the enactment of laws to support the development of their child care system. Moreover, this success also symbolizes an important choice of some of these actors to follow a professional path in the defense of their cause. As we shall discuss further on in our text, this option was not necessarily accepted by all organizations and represents one of the contentious issues which creates some division within the child care movement in the province.

## **7.2 FULL-DAY Kindergarten program**

One of the biggest changes in the delivery of child care services in Ontario in the last decades is the establishment of the full-day kindergarten program by the provincial government. This movement was fuelled by Dr. Pascal's report “*With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*”. This report, as mentioned earlier, suggested a full project to establish kindergarten in the province, including curriculum, budget, and program centered on learning-based play, among other elements.

University and college professors and their research centers in reality have constantly showed a great deal of influence on the provincial child care efforts. Earlier in 2004, the Best Start program was already one of most important efforts to develop a framework for ECE providers. In fact, Frazer Mustard and Margaret McCain's work, complemented by the panel of multiple Ontario scholars, arguably inspired Pascal subsequent study for kindergarten.

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<sup>26</sup> “The practice of early childhood education is the planning and delivery of inclusive play-based learning and care programs for children in order to promote the well-being and holistic development of children, and includes: the delivery of programs to pre-school children and school aged children, including children with special needs; the assessment of the programs and of the progress of children in the programs; communication with the parents or persons with legal custody of the children in the programs in order to improve the development of the children; and, such other services or activities as may be prescribed by the regulations”.

In order to understand the extent of the influence of Pascal's work is important to remember that the resulting full-day kindergarten program was originally requested by McGuinty's provincial government. In fact, the liberal government officially appointed the University of Toronto professor as Early Learning Advisor. In that role, he was charged specifically to establish the government planning for the development of early learning program.

Despite the important role that the educational institutions, through Dr. Pascal, played in writing the report, other intermediary organizations also had an important contribution to the final document. Dr. Pascal actively sought other child care network actors to provide materials, ideas, feedback, comments to his own initial concepts. During that period many conferences, talks, and discussion were realized involving the AECEO, the OCBCC, among other organizations. Also, after the publication of the report, many of these actors actively went out in defense of the planned program and its propositions.

In practical terms, Pascal's report had a huge impact on Ontario child care's network. First, despite the problems mentioned in our text and differences between the original Pascal proposal and its implementation<sup>27</sup>, kindergarten is being implemented by the provincial government. Since 2010, around 75% of Ontario schools began to officially implement the full-day early learning programs to four- and five years-old. Also, the kindergarten program also changed the government structure. Since 2012, child care was officially moved to the Ministry of Education which took the role of developing the child care policies and services. This development, according to many actors in the network, further legitimizes the ECE profession, despite the current kindergarten implementation problems.

*"Our association (AECEO) always believed that ECEs should be a part of the education system. And so we didn't necessarily advocate for childcare and early learning services to be moved over to the Ministry of Education which it has been, but in all the research that we did and all the position papers that we wrote we talked about how early learning and care or childcare or daycare or nursery is education [...] And so, over the years, we did try and bring attention both to the public and the government that ECEs were educators, that early learning and care and childcare was education and should be regarded as that and so all children should have access to early learning and care just as children 6 to 17 have a right to public education".*

*"ECEs were happy that early childhood education was being considered education and was moved to the ministry of education because that raised their status as professionals because while they were with social services, no one looked at them as educators. They were caregivers and everything else, but not educators. So it's a double edged sword, on the one hand they they're glad they're under education, but on the*

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, instead of the integrated extended day program proposed by Pascal's report, some schools offer an on-site before- and/or after-school program delivered by a third party.

*other hand they are not being treated like the professionals that they are. And they're watching as the centers that they worked in for years die away, they're watching their colleagues lose their jobs and families losing childcare spaces."*

The implementation of the full-day kindergarten program, however distorted from Pascal's initial proposal, is an important symbol of the power of child care intermediary organizations to impact on overarching projects which significantly transform their sector. More importantly, it also signifies the particular role played by academic organizations inside the province network. In fact, in our research, one of the things which caught our attention is the importance of research centers and universities in creating and disseminating knowledge that will effectively change governmental policies and programs. From our point of view, this is one particular feature which characterizes the distinctiveness to the Ontario child care movement.

### **7.3 2012 Budget negotiation**

In our research, many members of the studied intermediary organizations complain of the instability of Ontario's child care system which depends largely on the political inclinations of each new elected prime-minister. One important aspect of this reality is that these organizations are constantly called to demand and defend budget allocation to the sector. Without having a fixed amount of resources defined by provincial law, the child care organizations depend of the political action and contacts of many of its actors to guarantee financial support of its operations which are considered to be constantly under-funded.

One recent example of this constant struggle was the provincial budget of 2012. In that particular issue, two major organizations worked alongside the political parties to ensure a favorable outcome to child care organizations: CUPE and OCBCC. In fact, like we mentioned above, the OCBCC have an annual schedule which follows the provincial budget process from consultations to the final voting. Also, the organization mobilizes its members and the community-at-large to pressure constituents like the Anti-Austerity march and rally on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2012 against the 2012 Provincial budget.

During our research, we observed how OCBCC members' advocacy strategy benefited from the political forces at play at that particular time in Ontario. One of our interviewees explained the partnership developed with one of the most important parties at the provincial level, the New Democratic Party (NDP). This collaboration greatly affected their bargaining power with the Ontario government during the negotiations regarding the 2012 provincial budget.

*"Andrea Horwath who is the leader of the Ontario NDP, we have worked with her for many years, she was actually the critic responsible for childcare before she became*

*leader so we know that they have this longstanding support for affordable childcare and that's one of their issues. So the last few months were a little bit unusual because we had the opportunity to really raise the childcare as an issue with the NDP and we know that the liberals aren't against it they just need to be pushed to do it. So we did a number of community forums with NDP MPP and including where Andrea came out. So we did worked to get people in local communities involved so the NDP will feel there's a lot of people that want this and so they'll put that on the table in their negotiations with the liberals. They did that and the budget has recently passed. But without anybody helping the NDP have public support for the issue and doing the work to put pressure on the liberals as well, that issue might have been some other issue that was on the top of the agenda."*

CUPE is also permanently involved in building pressure on government for increasing the budget allocated to child care. As such, in 2012, CUPE's Local 79 also worked alongside with, NDP leader, Andrea Horwath's budget proposal which was able *"to protect 4,000 existing child care spaces – 2,000 of which are provided by the City of Toronto"*. In fact, Local 79 mobilized its members to contact the Premier and MPPs and was able to reverse the provincial's budget role on *"the potential impact of the Toronto Mayor's Task Force on Child Care agenda to reduce directly run, municipally-operated child care"*.

CUPE's impact on the child care budget has a long history in Ontario and it has impacted also in the general policies established for government grants. Considering the management challenges and budget limits of community-based child care centers, CUPE members remember its role in creating an alternative solution for improving wage conditions in these organizations. According to them:

*"CUPE took a leadership role probably about 20 years ago for the wage enhancement grants. We wanted to improve the wages in the sector, but we knew that to do that would increase the parents' fees. So we worked with the parents and with our board members to go to the provincial government to say look: "we need to take people more to come in to the field, but we need to keep the fees for the parents low". So we were successful in doing that by working with the parents and the union to pressure the province for those wage enhancement grants. So, today, each ECE position has approximately 6 000 \$ a year per staff in wage enhancement grants. That was a policy initiative that came from the recognition of parents in the system that it was too expensive and the staff that desperately needed wage increases and didn't want to do it at the expense of parents. And we did that campaign again through Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Coalition for Better Childcare and through all of our locals here in Ontario"*

The influence of intermediary organizations on the budget allocated to their child care sector is an important element in the survival of the network. In 2012, these organizations managed to secure an infusion of \$242 million in child care funding over 3 years to the Ontario budget. Until the province establishes a more permanent solution, the role played by these organizations guarantees the minimum resources to the operation of the under-funded child care operators. Particularly, in a particular economic climate where, according to one participant:

*“[Child care is] never going to be number one [priority], health care and jobs are always going to be number one because they always affect the most number of people. But we never want childcare and childcare funding to not be on the agenda. So we do everything we can to help people make that an issue”.*

#### **7.4 Ontario’s working paper “Modernizing child care”**

The significant influence of child care intermediary organizations on provincial government’s policies for the sector has a more recent and poignant example. Following the full-day kindergarten program, the Ontario Ministry of Education divulged in 2012 a document called “Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together”. In this text the Ministry celebrates recent achievements in child care (College of ECEs, kindergarten, etc.) and proposes new avenues for the future of child care in the province.

There are two important elements who indicated the co-construction aspect of this initiative. First and foremost, the Ministry clearly indicates that this endeavour was taken to answer specific demands and criticisms from the child care sector organizations. In fact, in its introduction, government officials acknowledge the importance of these actors while accepting the current limitations of the child care system, which were detected by them:

*“We have heard from partners and stakeholders that we need a comprehensive vision and plan for child care that works with FDK. Stakeholders have told us that there are challenges with the current funding system and that the legislation (the Day Nurseries Act) governing child care is outdated and needs to be revised to reflect current evidence and experience. We also know that program quality varies across the province and greater supports are required to promote consistency and foster the healthy development of children. Finally, accountability within the sector must be strengthened and better access to local data is required to inform decision-making and measure success.”*

The second aspect which makes this document an important sign of the growing recognition of child care intermediary organizations as partners is its essential purpose. According to the

Ministry, this publication is fundamentally a first step into opening the debate with child care stakeholders to construct a common project to overcome the problems identified by them. In essence, as the document states:

*“This paper is meant to introduce a conversation about the long-term vision for child care in Ontario, as well as targeted medium-term objectives for the next three years. The conversation is intended to include service system managers and First Nations partners, child care operators, children’s service providers, registered early childhood educators, school boards, parents and families, as well as others interested in the child care system in Ontario.”*

In the document, the Ministry addresses specific unmet needs in the sector like the integration of child care and full-day kindergarten, stable and comprehensive funding, improvement of the current legislation, consistency in quality across the province, and stronger accountability by the organizations. Solutions are then proposed for each problem: create a new funding formula; promote child care spaces in schools; build a mandatory provincial program guideline; propose amendments to update current regulatory framework; and new methods of evaluating and licensing child care services.

In the other side of this co-construction process, child care intermediary organizations immediately and massively responded to the “conversation” proposed by the Ministry of Education. During our research, we were to witness this process and collect official answers written by many different actors like: CUPE 4400, University of Toronto (Atkinson Centre), Child Development Institute, AECEO, OCBCC, City of Toronto Children’s Services, child care operators, and MPPs like New Democratic Peter Tabuns from Toronto-Danforth. One member of AECEO described the ongoing dynamic at the time of the community discussion over the Ministry paper:

*“They (the Ministry of Education) just sent out a doc, a discussion paper about three weeks ago asking for feedback by the end of August or September I should say. Around issues in the Day Nursery’s Act, what is quality, addressing the pedagogical issues and then they’re going to start working on creating the communality throughout Ontario. So they’re just at the beginning stages of that. [...] all the advocates and advocacy agencies in Ontario that have any connection to the earliers are in-involved. So it would be the AECEO, the OCBCC, the Child Institute, Parents for Education, Atkinson’s center, educational institutions, Canadian Childcare Federation. I think that that anybody who has anything to do with the ealiers right now are full fledge involved in all of this.”*

Without getting into the details of each individual document, each stakeholder, in general, analyzed the “Modernizing Child Care in Ontario” questions and solutions from its particular perspective would it be professional, union, organizational, public service etc. They also



separately proposed amendments, additions, and alternatives to the government's proposal. The debate is not yet closed and the Ministry hasn't yet responded to the stakeholders' commentaries and criticisms to its overall plan. However, what remains is the government's significant action of openly recognizing and asking for inputs from Ontario's child care intermediary organizations and other actors in the sector to collectively co-construct this "*comprehensive vision and plan for child care*" which will orient future policies and programs.

The opportunity to offer inputs to construct government new general policies and programs in child care is an important demonstration of the power retained by Ontario's intermediary organizations. However, despite past success and because of perennial government instability, there are many actors in the child care network who cast doubt on these dialogue processes initiated by the government. In general, they remain skeptical about the practical implications of such "conversation":

*"Everyone thinks it's a good idea, however, it's how the government is going about it. They're holding consultation and they're asking for written submissions and all of these things but we don't have a lot of faith that our input is going to make a difference. We think that given economic reality and the austerity measures that governments have in place and so on that the government... we don't really think that they're that serious especially when they're going to modernise the system and they're going to make sure that it's a system that is strong and accessible and all these things. However, there is going to be no money whatsoever that's going to be put in and that's one of the biggest problems in childcare in Ontario today is that it's underfunded, it's grossly underfunded. So how are you going to modernise something without putting any sort of financial support behind it? It is ludicrous. So that's why we think that they're not really serious. So, you know, some of us think that, you know, they're just putting us through these exercises to make us happy and to make us think like we're helping out but really, they know that there's nothing much that they can do."*



## 8. CO-PRODUCTION OF POLICY IN THE ONTARIO AND TORONTO CHILD CARE SECTOR

When discussing co-production in our research, we declared that we would focus mostly on the macro-sociological analysis of the interaction between government, market, and third sector organizations. In this section, more specifically, we will begin by analyzing the partnership created between these actors in providing the child care services in the province of Ontario and the City of Toronto. Most importantly, while discussing their specific importance, we will offer a perspective of the influence of Ontario intermediary organizations in the construction of this picture.

Our research object, namely child care, however is considered a “*service de proximité*” which usually engage families and other stakeholders in conceiving and delivering the organizational activity. Due to this quality, we will also take the opportunity, in this section, to analyze some of the micro-sociological aspects of the impact of users in the co-production of services at the organizational level. Here also, we will present the data at the light of the role of intermediary organizations in this process.

### 8.1. Macro co-production: the public and non-profit option

From the macro level perspective, we found in our research that the co-production of child care implicates actors from the three different sectors – government, private companies, and non-profit organizations – but with different status and perspectives. Particularly in the City of Toronto, there was almost from the beginning a clear option, officially established by the City Council in 2004, for public and non-profit child care operators. Since then, public, non-profit, and private companies have been establishing in the province but with different kinds of support and accountability demands by the local government.

As mentioned above, the City of Toronto possess 922 licensed child care centers, from which 52 (5.6%) are municipal child care centres, 631 (68.4%) non-profit and 239 (25.9%) commercial child care organizations. Therefore, almost three-quarters of the child care operators are either run by the government or by third sector organizations which reinforces the public and non-profit option sustained by the City of Toronto. Nevertheless, most actors in the network identify a trend towards privatization. In fact, according to statistics in four years, from 2008 until 2012, private services augmented 17% while municipal dropped 10% and non-profit increased 4.5%. In general, private companies went from 22% to 25.9% of the total of child care operators.

This preoccupation with the potential privatization of services by the child care network stakeholders increased because of two different but interrelated processes. First, in the last

decade, we witnessed the arrival of different corporate chains of child care. This corporatization of child care in Canada was best represented by Busy Beavers Learning Centers, a client of ABC Developmental Learning Centers Pty Ltd. (also known as ABC Learning) which is considered the largest child care business in the world with over 2,300 centers in four countries. This multinational corporation arrived in Canada in 2007 but, due to efforts by many child care intermediary organizations to block government subsidy to private operators, it collapsed in the subsequent year amidst accusations of financial fraud.

Intermediary organizations also play other important roles which will influence the trend towards or against privatization in Ontario. First of all, many child care actors studied – particularly the City of Toronto, AECEO, the OCBCC, CUPE, and many educational institutions – have developed studies which support with empirical evidence that non-profit child care has better results in terms of quality and social impact. Secondly, all these organizations also work in disseminating this information to public officials, MPPs, parents, and the community in general, in order to influence the public opinion and have a significant impact on policies. As demonstrated with the ABC Learning case, this work may have a significant impact in hindering the dominance of private solutions to child care.

The other fact that has been threatening to change the distribution of centers towards private options is the current problems faced by child care organizations during the implementation of the full-day learning program in Ontario. As already mentioned above, this governmental initiative has encountered many obstacles due essentially to the lack of funds to support the transition from child care to kindergarten. In fact, intermediary organizations have been denouncing the lack of the promised support by the government to the child care organizations who were left with the most expensive and demanding part of child development. According to a member of the AECEO, this problem has practical consequences to the centers:

*“We were under the understanding that when full day kindergarten was implemented that the government was prepared to ensure that the existing childcare services were not going to suffer as a result of moving the 4 and 5 year olds into school and over to education. That never happened. [...] There was supposed to be some savings in moving these 4 and 5 year olds over. And that was going to help centers who now were looking after younger children, which of course is more expensive to do. It was going to allow them to make the changes to their programs that were necessary for them to stay in place. That never happened. So now we have centers closing left right and center. Basically the government is allowing the childcare sector to die.”*

Despite these tendencies, the public and non-profit option in the City of Toronto remains one great obstacle to the creation of private child care centers. In that arrangement, they are not qualified to receive subsidies and grants that benefit municipal and non-profits. Only for profit child care operators who were licensed before this initiative still have access to these resources.

## 8.2. Micro co-production: the role of parents

In order to effectively investigate the impact of users on the co-production of activities inside child care centers, it would have been necessary to have better access to these organizations' daily work. Our research however limited itself, by design, to examine the child care network and its actors from a macro perspective. Therefore, we weren't able to observe and investigate the interaction of parents with ECEs, their work inside board meetings and committees, i.e. their participation in the decision-making and the child care activities themselves.

The best indications we found about the participation of parents in child care centers are linked to the quality assessment performed by the City of Toronto's Children's Services. As mentioned above, the agency was developing, alongside the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)<sup>28</sup> at the University of Toronto, an assessment tool which guides and evaluates child care operators' activities. The Toronto Operating Criteria is applicable to all child care centres with a fee subsidy contract with the City of Toronto.

One particular important element that impacts user participation is the new board governance criteria. The governance criteria is intended to help child care centers executive boards meet the standards upheld by Children's Services on areas such as: General Membership; Board Composition; Board Meetings; Annual General Meetings; Administrative Responsibilities; and Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct Policies and Procedures. This tool was created, according to the agency, to:

*"Support non-profit boards of directors in meeting the provisions required when an agency enters into a service contract with Children's Services. The Board Governance Criteria are presented in a way that allows operators to conduct a self-assessment and identify potential training needs". (Children's Services, 2009)*

Through this assessment tool, we identified a demand by the agency towards more user participation in the general management of the child care center. For instance, as criteria for good general membership, Children's Services demand the creation of rules and written methods of recruiting and encouraging members to get involved in the organization's activities. Also, when establishing the board, centers are supposed to develop a strategy for a diverse membership including different members possessing distinct valued expertise. Finally, this board should have in its administrative responsibilities the role of establishing both human resource and financial policies.

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<sup>28</sup> Besides the implication of OISE, the tool was developed and continues to be revised with the help of the community and intermediary organizations. Their participation is especially important through the establishment of a community advisory group.

The Toronto Operating Criteria establishes a trend which should be followed by all child care centers if they want to receive subsidies and grants from the municipal government. In fact, according to the Children's Services, in each of the child care centers run by the municipality of Toronto, there will be parent's advisory committees made up of volunteer parents who are in the program. Furthermore, in the city, most non-profit organizations have the active participation of parent representatives. Some of the larger organizations will have a multidisciplinary board of directors, where they'll develop a parent advisory group. In all these cases, parents will have an opportunity to influence the delivery of the child care program. Also, parents will be involved in all centers on an individual basis, as part of the curriculum, in their own child development.

This analysis of co-production inside child care organizations began to answer two cross-sectional questions that we proposed in the beginning of our research: (1) To what extent and how do intermediary organizations help prepare child care members for management, and (2) to what extent does their activity contribute to the development of a more democratic management model. These questions touch essentially how these groups impact directly and indirectly on work conditions, educators' status, as well as their participation on the decisions concerning definition/ production of policies and practices of local management.

As we have seen in the analysis of the Ontario child care network, many actors act in different aspects of the organizations' activity. On one side, intermediary organizations such as the AECEO or the College have a focus deeply centered on professionalization matters. Therefore they are essential in defending the status of ECEs as a professional group and defining standards of practice and code of ethics for the profession. Consequentially, their impact inside the child care organizations is linked to the status of the ECE and the recognition of its expertise by parents.

According to AECEO members, they also encourage ECEs "to become more engaged and take a leadership role at all levels" including its local branch and provincial association. At the organizational level, since most operators are led by parent boards, this means participating in an advisory role in meetings. As such the Association offers different resources and tools like publications, workshops, leadership focused conferences. In fact, as mentioned before, for two years, AECEO organized a Team Building and Leadership seminars for its members.

Other intermediary organizations, for example the OCBCC and CUPE, concentrate their efforts chiefly in the support given by the provincial and municipal government to the good operation of child care organizations. They are particularly interested in assuring adequate funding will be granted to the organizations to improve existing services and to create more places for families in need. Therefore, their work will have a more significant impact on work conditions and wages offered by public and non-profit operators.

The impact of intermediary groups on a more democratic model of management inside the child care organizations is assured by organizations like Children's Services and OCBCC. Besides the

impact of the quality assessment tool developed by the City of Toronto's Children Services, the agency also privileges parent consultation not only on larger system planning, but also inside municipal child care centers through parent advisory committees. OCBCC, alongside Toronto's agency, have an important role in executive board training where they offer courses and direct help to ensure that boards have in place the necessary tools, documents, policies, among others, to accomplish their work. OCBCC developed, for instance, "The Child Care Management Guide" (in its third edition) which intends to "provide community based child care programs with learning and management tools".

ECEs also take a role in this model not only by advising parent boards inside child care organizations but also, in the child care system. They participate as members of all committees inside Toronto Children's Services and other groups like the District Child Care Advisory Committee and Toronto Child and Family Network. These groups are constantly consulted to offer their expertise to build and monitor the City of Toronto's child care service plan and to develop policy at the city level.

The real measure of the democratization of management inside child care operators in Ontario however deserves a deeper micro-level study. Although, we can accept the impact of regulation, training, and administrative tools created and provided by the intermediary organizations, its real impact can only be observed with a research into the management routine of these organizations in order to be able to discern general tendencies. As other child care studies have shown, the measure of autonomy in these cases is still high enough to permit divergent actions (Barros, 2011).





## **9. THE MULTIPLE IMPACTS OF INTERMEDIARY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ONTARIO DAY CARE SECTOR**

As a complement to our analysis of intermediary organizations actions and in the light of their accomplishments in terms of co-construction and co-production of public policy, we will now examine their effective impact on the child care sector in Ontario. In the previous action portrait, we saw how these groups performed different roles such as political, professional, cognitive, regulative, and administrative. These however had different degrees of success depending on the composition of forces which sometimes reinforce and other times oppose each other. Moreover, the correlation of forces and their direction change through time which creates instability concerning the long term results of some actions. As with actions, these impacts are not neatly separated instead they normally intersect (Figure 5).

In terms of political action, the main groups involved were essentially CUPE and OCBCC particularly due to legal constraints of other actors which in general converge in their support for this struggle though not officially. The work performed by CUPE and OCBCC have important practical impact for child care organizations as witnessed by the budget negotiations of 2012 which guaranteed an investment for three more years in the sector. However, we suggest that these accomplishments are partial due to two factors. Admittedly, the resources allocated by the government don't cover the whole needs of Ontario's child care sector. Most importantly, however, the limited frame of the budget agreement means that there is no guarantee that another agreement will be reached in the future. These processes depend too much on the political forces in place at any given time which creates a high degree of uncertainty for the sector's long term planning. In this sense, the expertise and involvement of these organizations will virtually be always needed to maintain this unstable success.

The professional efforts in the child care sector have achieved a significant amount of success with the creation of the College of ECEs. Nowadays, this new regulatory body and the AECEO share the actions to better establish, control, and develop the early childhood profession. However, this path has been criticized by other organizations who consider that workers cannot be held completely accountable in a system that does not provide the minimum work conditions for child care educators. As such, there are some divergent forces in this professionalization process which nevertheless greatly impacted the sector with the creation of new standards, code of ethics, equivalency process, etc.

The cognitive work is an essential part of the recent development of Ontario's child care. Education institutions along with the CCCF and the recently extinct CCHRSC have produced a huge amount of data about the child care sector, its workers, its societal effects, and needs, and this knowledge has supported various different actions carried out by other intermediary organizations. There is a huge amount of convergence among groups on the benefits and

importance of this work which can be illustrated by the effort accomplished during the construction of Prof. Pascal's report. Moreover, the report, and the implementation of the full-day kindergarten program, demonstrates how these cognitive actions can have a concrete impact on the child care sector.

Certain elements however nuance this success. First of all, as seen in the case of FDK, most cognitive work has few chances of been adequately used without the political action of its members. Actually, some groups criticize these research groups, particularly the CCCF and the CCHRSC, for the lack of more effective activism to promote and defend its propositions. In fact, due to government budget limitations and intermediary organizations' limited political power, the kindergarten program has been changed and strayed from the initial collectively agreed propositions of Pascal's report.

The regulative efforts are ultimately controlled by one actor, namely the provincial government and its Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, in our research, we found that through time there is, in most administrations, an effort to include and consult child care intermediary organizations in the decisions in terms of policies and programs. This dynamic is most recently represented by Ontario's working paper "Modernizing Child Care" which was sent as an invitation to dialogue to provincial groups and responded by most. This open conversation had across time some real impacts like in the wage enhancement grant program defended and attained by OCBCC and CUPE, among others. Nevertheless, intermediary organizations still question the real influence of their positions on this dialogue, particularly since this relationship partnership is also highly vulnerable to political dynamics in the provincial government which may quickly transform their partnership in antagonism.

Finally, Toronto Children's Services, along with other municipalities' agencies, concentrate the administrative power. In this action, they work together with many provincial and local intermediary organizations to ensure the best support to child care operators. The agency has an important impact on how these organizations function particularly through the demands linked to the benefits of licensing. One important example is the governance criteria which establish standards to be met by child care centers executive boards. This impact may still be limited by budget constraints since organizational compliance demands resources that are constantly lacking.

**Figure 5 – Main actions and impacts of child care intermediary organizations**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Main actors</b>	<b>Dynamics</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Political</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotion of child care model</li> <li>- Grassroots mobilization</li> <li>- Political pressure</li> <li>- Investment advocacy</li> <li>- Public awareness creation</li> </ul>	OCBCC CUPE	Convergent/Divergent	Unstable success	2012 Budget negotiation
<i>Professional</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation/control of standards</li> <li>- Public accountability</li> <li>- Training promotion</li> <li>- Network development</li> </ul>	CECE AECEO	Divergent	Contested success	Creation of CECE
<i>Cognitive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research production</li> <li>- Information dissemination</li> </ul>	CCCF CCHRSC Educational institutions	Convergent	Success	Pascal's report/FDK
<i>Regulative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of policies/laws</li> <li>- Programs development</li> </ul>	Ontario Ministry of Education	Convergent/Divergent	Unstable success	Ontario's working paper Wage enhancement grant
<i>Administrative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System planning</li> <li>- System administration</li> <li>- Management of municipal centers</li> </ul>	Toronto Children's Services	Convergent	Success	Governance criteria



## 10. DISCUSSION

In our discussion section, we will address some of the main issues that were gathered from our data, which explain the specificity of Ontario's and Toronto's child care system. We will begin by addressing the existence of different logics amongst child care organizations and how this affects their impact on the child care network. Next, we discuss the professional path taken by the child care system, its potential and problems. Finally, we end our section with the analysis of the child care intermediary organizations as a social movement.

### 10.1 The divided work and impact of intermediary organizations

During our research, one of the underlying themes that kept surfacing in our data was the differences between child care intermediary organizations. In many of our interviews, participants claimed that many of their actions or preferences were not necessarily shared by other actors. Also, many times, organization members strongly criticized other groups for not openly taking a specific position which they thought was the ideal one for the child care network.

In general, intermediary organizations differed in their position around two main themes: ideal type of child care operator and system development path. First of all, many actors, primarily the OCBCC and CUPE, were strong advocates against the private option for child care. In fact, these groups also diverged since the Coalition favored the "Quebec style" non-profit choice and CUPE openly defended the public child care service as the sole sensible option as non-profit organizations were also considered instable and weak in terms of quality.

From their perspective, the AECEO and the College of ECEs also partake in the option for publicly-funded child care in Ontario. However, both organizations have a charitable organization status which prevents them from engaging in any advocacy work against or in favor of any option. One member from the AECEO resumed their situation: "We do advocacy but with a small 'a'". Such position differs from the one taken by the OCBCC and CUPE who criticize their high emphasis on professionalization and little influence on supporting child care organizations.

The criticisms by these intermediary organizations however are much more incisive in relation to the CCCF. According to these groups, despite all the known and widely disseminated studies about the best quality in public and non-profit child care, the Canadian Child Care Federation has been ambiguous in their support for the non-private child care model. This situation created distrust by many intermediary organizations towards CCCF, as stated by one of our interviewees, which prevents stronger collaboration.

The second point of contention between Ontario's intermediary organizations concerns the ideal development path to be taken by the child care system. Here again, we have different perspectives from the OCBCC and CUPE, on one side, and the AECEO and the College of ECEs, on the other. The coalition and the union center their work majorly on the material elements necessary for the adequate functioning of child care operators. As such, for them, the ideal development of child care supposes increasing financial resources provided by the provincial and municipal governments which will create better wages and working conditions for workers as well as more places for families.

The Association and the College, however, have a different perspective on the priorities for child care. Both organizations, loyal to their mission, have their work based on a professional logic. For them, the best path for the development of the child care system in Ontario and its municipalities pass necessarily through the growing recognition of the Early Childhood Educator. For them, the professionalization of ECEs is a necessary step which will eventually lead to a better structure for child care organizations.

Over the last decade, the professional option defended by the AECEO and the College has been more successful than the struggle for more public funding and work conditions led by the OCBCC and CUPE. In fact, the creation of the College of ECEs is in itself a compelling illustration of this professionalization process. In the next section, we will discuss the reasons behind this option as well as its beneficial and negative consequences for the child care system.

## **10.2 The professional option**

With the creation of the College of Early Childhood Educators, the Ontario intermediary organizations effectively chose the professional path to develop child care services instead of social movements or unions focus on work conditions. In this path, mostly defended by the AECEO, the recognition of the expertise and practice of the ECEs by the government and society-at-large is considered the first and fundamental step to the growth and improvement of child care services in the province.

While the creation of the College and the resulting further professionalization of ECEs was celebrated by many actors in the child care network, other intermediary organization were less receptive of this process. The OCBCC and CUPE were largely the most critical about this professional option. According to them, pushing for a professional agenda before adequate funding by the government to support the accomplishment of the required standards is a way of putting the onus on the individual underpaid worker for what is manifestly a system failure.

Despite these criticisms, both organizations eventually decided to support those changes and accept the new College of ECEs. Both the Coalition and CUPE ultimately admitted the benefit of the increased recognition and respect derived from this new group while still battling for more public financial support for child care organizations. However, even the AECEO personnel, despite its historical link to the College, eventually felt the consequences of this new professional path symbolized by the new regulatory body created by the government.

The main point of contention between the College of ECEs and the AECEO is the equivalency process. As mentioned above, the Association created and conducted this process for many years with an important focus on the practical expertise acquired by the workers which, from their point of view, stood in for the professional academic requirements. With the arrival of the College, the equivalency task was transferred to this regulatory body and the main logic behind the process significantly changed. Now, the College focus exclusively on the formal training undertaken by the applicants and neglects their work experience.

In our conversations with members of the AECEO, we observed how this particular modification was in complete disagreement with their own vision of professionalization. Despite the permanent link and collaboration between these organizations, the Association was not able to use their influence inside the College to undo those changes. From their perspective, the College of ECEs, while respecting AECEO's experience and knowledge in child care, decided to follow the formal demands of their mandate.

This conflict clearly demonstrates a significant contradiction of the professionalization process in the province of Ontario. The network actors involved have to be able to balance ECEs social recognition with the demands of public accountability. From this point of view, the AECEO professional logic conflicts directly with the one defended by the College. The regulatory body has as its main mission to protect the public and not to defend the early childhood educators.

### **10.3 Social movement?**

All these differences and conflicts observed between Ontario child care intermediary organizations led us to the question of the existence of a real social movement in their midst. At the history of child care in Canada, there were important public demonstrations, in the seventies and eighties, defending child care needs which were led by women's movement amongst other actors. However, in our research these important social movements are not mentioned by any of the interviewed parties and seem to be outside of the current picture.

In fact, what we observed is the quasi absence of involvement from the community despite the effort made by intermediary organizations such as the OCBCC and CUPE in mobilizing local

families. CUPE members, in fact, are the most important critical mass achieved in the last decade. For instance, according to the press<sup>29</sup>, the most important demonstration in 2012, the Anti-Austerity march on April 21st 2012, was composed essentially by unionized workers.

There are many elements found in our research which could explain the actual lack of mobilization situation in Ontario and Toronto, in particular. First of all, the division of responsibility between provincial and municipal governments, where the former provides the major funds while the latter manages the system, makes demonstrations more difficult to accomplish than in more centralized systems where the target is a unified entity. OCBCC members mentioned, above in our text, their effort with parents to create awareness of the role played by each government level: *“if you don’t get a child subsidy, you think it’s the city of Toronto’s fault and it really isn’t. They spend the money that the province gives them”*.

Another piece of the puzzle, the kindergarten program, has recently been implemented and complicated even further the task of creating awareness and mobilizing the community. In fact, the kindergarten program, as we have seen, is a provincial initiative which has to be carried out by municipalities. This program has in itself some contradictory outcomes which may underwhelm the overall actors’ mobilization. In fact, while benefiting many families who need space for their 4 year-olds, the current execution of full-day learning has been destructive towards the already-underfunded child care operators. Even for the major intermediary organizations in Ontario, the decision of supporting the program at the expense of child care has been difficult.

Finally, the aforementioned division between the child care intermediary organizations may also be an important cause of the lack of social movement mobilization in Ontario. The conflict between non-profit, public and private option as well as between the professional or the work conditions development path hinder a *de facto* sense of common purpose amidst these groups which, in turn, hampers a better community involvement and mobilization.

In conclusion, the lack of cohesiveness between Ontario child care intermediary organizations prevents a greater impact by a full-blown social movement potentially capable of improving significantly the network of child care services offered to families. Despite these limitations, it is important to underline their important work in advancing the recognition of the early childhood educator profession and in keeping the system afloat despite all setbacks in terms of public funding by federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The devotion and competence of these actors individually shouldn’t be taken for granted; their real collective effort would however have been a much greater force.

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<sup>29</sup> CBC News “Labour groups rally at Queen’s Park” on April 21st, 2012.



## CONCLUSION

The role of intermediary organizations had not been analyzed in previous studies of social economy in Ontario. In our research, we suggested that these groups could play an important part in the connection between third sector organizations and government. They could work to enact legislation that could further their cause and also help them gather the resources needed to fulfill their mission towards their communities. To understand their place in the co-construction and co-production of public policy, it was necessary to investigate their history, structure, and interaction and understand how these elements hinder or further their influence on governments, organizations, and society, in general. Our research answers this need.

Through the analysis of the Ontario child care intermediary organizations, we were able to identify its main components and paint a portrait of the complex child care network in the province and the City of Toronto. We established their history, their structure, and mission which colored how these organizations interacted in the pursuit of the development of the child care sector. We also show their relationship with the provincial and municipal governments and its effect on the co-construction of public policy. In fact, we identified their ability to influence the enactment of laws, the specification of programs guidelines, the establishment of budgets, and the creation of general policies.

Besides these contributions to the study of co-construction, our research also showed the limits of the impact of the intermediary organizations. From our data, we detected a multiple divergent interests between the Ontario child care groups which divided themselves between the ideal type of child care operator (public, non-profit or private) and system development path (focus on professionalization or work conditions). This wide disagreement between these organizations, from our point of view, led to a weaker social movement mobilization and, as a consequence, a lower impact on child care services development.

This analysis of the divided network of intermediary organizations indicates one of the practical implications of our study. With the clear identification of each organization's mission, and the history that justifies and legitimates it, child care groups could be able to establish a better dialogue between themselves which can, at the same time, respect each other's idiosyncratic perspectives and forge a better common purpose while pursuing their collective objectives. Also, with our study, child care operators should be able to understand their intermediary organizations and to develop a better partnership with them by benefiting of their expertise and services (and be aware of their limitations).

The impact of these intermediary organizations on human resources policies is highly varied particularly in relation to the specific element and the type of child care organizations.

Municipally-operated child care centers benefit from policies established by municipalities with their local agencies, such as Toronto Children's Services, who offer training, control work conditions, and provide public pension plans. Other licensed operators (community-based and private) are also supposed to follow these work standards to guarantee their continuity in the system.

CUPE has also an important impact on human resources policies in community-based centers where there are negotiated training, work conditions, and pension plans. In our research, however, the participants considered that most non-unionized small (community-based or private) child care operators don't necessarily follow or have developed any established human resources policies, for instance in terms of labor relations, health and security, internal training, etc.

Our study, of course, possesses some limitations which are linked essentially to our chosen research design. Particularly, the macro perspective employed to understand intermediary organizations, through document review and interviews, didn't give us a sufficient grasp of the micro-sociological aspects of co-production. More specifically, we weren't able to observe and identify how parents and educators were integrated in child care organizations' daily activities and how this affected their overall management model and its potential democratization. This limit also affects the information gathered about human resources policies.

This study limitation opens up our first suggestion for future researches. In essence, to better understand the co-production process inside child care organizations, we would recommend a full ethnographic methodology using participant observation where the research could accompany daily management activities (executive board meetings, committee reunions, etc.). As a last suggestion, we would propose a deeper micro-sociological study of community mobilization inside intermediary organizations which could complete our macro analysis of the limits and perspectives of this protest tool in the current context of social movements.

In conclusion, we would like to acknowledge the genuine devotion and extremely valuable contribution that all intermediary organizations have made to the child care network and its members. In that sense, any criticism conveyed in these pages does not diminish their important work to all Ontario and Toronto families. We sincerely thank them for their helpful and generous contribution to this study and hope that our research may help them accomplish their objectives and demonstrate even further their essential role to the child care community.

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## ANNEX

### 14. 1 INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### 1) Emerging conditions

- a. When the association was created?
- b. Why was it created (which needs or aspirations)?
- c. Who took the initiative (actors)?
- d. Highlights of its history (important changes and decisions)
- e. Different phases of its evolution?

#### 2) Internal dynamic

- a. Who are its members? How are they chosen?
- b. What are its goals?
- c. What are the main accomplishments?
- d. Who are your clients/partners?
- e. Explain your political action.
- f. Which services do you offer?
  - i. Training
  - ii. Labor relations
  - iii. Pension funds
  - iv. Networking
  - v. Health and security at work
- g. Describe your organizational structure?
- h. How is the decision-making process? Are members consulted?

#### 3) External dynamic

- a. Do you work with the private sector? How?
- b. Are unions considered partners in the association?
- c. Do you collaborate with other child care associations? At the local, provincial and national level?
  - i. Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario
  - ii. Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care
  - iii. College of Early Childhood Educators
  - iv. Child Care Human Resources Sector Council

- v. Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF)
- vi. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
- vii. Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care
- d. How is your relation with the provincial and municipal government (Ministry of Children and Youth Services/ Education and Municipality of Toronto/ Children Services)?
  - i. Funding
  - ii. Coordination
  - iii. Influence on provincial and local child care policies
  - iv. What are the major policies and programs in child care in Ontario/Toronto?

#### 4) Portrait of the network

- a. Who are the main actors in the network?
- b. What are their roles?
- c. What do you think is the role of coalitions and other intermediary associations?
- d. What links should exist between them?
- e. What aspects should improve?
- f. What is your role in the creation of a collaborative atmosphere with government and other stakeholders?

#### 5) Impact

- a. Impact on innovation diffusion
- b. Impact on economic performances
- c. Impact on networking
- d. Impact on human resource aspects
  - i. Training
  - ii. Insurance
  - iii. Pension fund
  - iv. Labor relations
  - v. Health and safety at work
  - vi. Information sharing
- e. Impact on provincial and municipal policies